The recollections of a Virginia newspaper man, by Herbert T. Ezekiel.

When I was in “the Army.” Yours belligerently, Herbest T. Ezekiel

The Recollections OF A Virginia Newspaper Man BY HERBERT T. EZEKIEL

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Richmond, Virginia HERBERT T. EZEKIEL, Printer and Publisher

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PREFACE

The writer of these reminiscences is not old. Nor does he propose to become so, having made a solemn promise to himself to that effect. Nevertheless, he is confronted by the fact that the sere and yellow (leaf, not streak) is approaching. Fourteen years will bring him beyond the Biblical limitation of three score and ten. Sad experience has taught him that old age and garrulity, as a rule, go hand in hand. Let the mind be ever so active, there comes a time when it cannot be directed into a particular channel and, to all intents and purposes, is beyond control. He has a vivid recollection of an occasion some two years ago, when he questioned a man of eighty-four as to something that occurred in Richmond in 1857. “Oh, yes,” he replied, “that was the year when I went to see Aunt Sally Richardson down in Gloucester.” He gave a complete list of Aunt Sally's ancestors and descendants, with their first, last and nicknames, but never a word about Richmond in 1857.

Only two weeks ago the waiter of this had a call over the phone from W. J. Carter, the “Broad Rock” of former sporting days. He wanted to know how many of the “Old Guard” who worked on the Dispatch in the early nineties were yet alive. This, coupled with the request of friends, that he put his recollections in permanent form, has led to the commission of this crime of cacoethes scribendi. Theirs be the blame.

One of the objects of these sketches, if so they may be called, is to give the average lay reader an idea how news stories are secured and written. Some years ago a friend 6 remarked to the writer, “It must be very interesting to know all the news before it is published.” To which he replied, “It is not what we publish that is interesting, but that which

we do not publish. If everything we know were printed the population of the city would be depleted rapidly."

Many people under varying circumstances has it been his fortune to know. Pathos, pain, misery and joy have been mixed indiscriminately. Yet, can he truthfully say that never did he set down aught in malice, and when compelled to write that which wounded others he suffered equally with them.

His conscience in this respect is clear. His long account is approaching. This one payment will be met promptly at maturity. There will be no discount, no renewal, no curtail. Probably a number of those who knew him will be unsolicited endorsers. If a few of his friends should feel inclined to enter protest he would know, even in death, that his life work has not been in vain.

January, 1920.

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Retrospection.

My life-long friend, Evan R. Chesterman (he of "Idle Reporter" fame) suggests that a better understanding of what follows in this little volume can be had if conditions in the days written of are contrasted with those of 1920.

It will be hard for him who helps to make the present Richmond a hustling, bustling metropolitan hive of nearly two hundred thousand realize the free and easy business methods prevalent in the '70's and early '80's. All transactions were pervaded with friendliness and good fellowship. Every business man knew all other business men personally. There were no such things as office boys, and if you wished to see a person, you went and saw him, with no one to bar your progress or say you nay. In one respect has there been no change. The latitude and longitude of Richmond are identically the same as in my boyhood days.

In 1870, the Government census gave the city 51,038 inhabitants. It must be remembered that probably half of these were negroes, who at that time were only five years removed from slavery. Conditions had not adjusted themselves, and as factors in the community the colored people were practicallly nil, far from being the splendid trained workers of today who are recognized as an important integre of the citizenship of Richmond. Deducting half this figure leaves in round numbers 25,000 white people. The accepted proportion makes one person out of five a male worker. This left 5,000 people (for women did not work then, in public establishments, at least) to carry on the commerce of the city. A larger number than this now 8 follow their avocations on Main Street between Eighth and Twelfth. Twice these and more Richmond sent to the war in 1917 and 1918, when by the closing in of remaining workers and application of greater efficiency, business went on “as usual.” Then, it must not be forgotten that in 1865 the principal portion of the business section had been destroyed. Every financial institution, but one, ruined by the war, and there remained neither money nor credit. It is an old story, but one that loses nothing in the telling. The men of that day were giants and they performed wonders.

In the State assessment for 1878 the value of Richmond's real estate is given as $28,018,156; personal property, $7,421,854; incomes, $1,220,556—total, $36,660,566. Day before yesterday a single bank sent me its statement, showing its resources to be over $42,000,000; twenty per cent greater than the entire values in Richmond forty-two years ago. And yesterday morning (January 18, 1920,) a statement in the local daily gave the banking resources of Richmond as in excess of $183,000,000, more than five times all values at the period mentioned.

What amazing changes have taken place. It is exceedingly difficult to know where to begin. As the youth lightly turns to thoughts of love, the normal adult male is wont to dwell on that most relentless of passions—eating. In the early seventies there were few restaurants, excepting Zetelle's and one or two others patronized by those of means. The average business man went home to dinner; he took his time, and, in some instances, a

nap. There were no cafeterias, no quick lunch rooms, no counters at which the hungry might refresh themselves. Few people dined before 3 o'clock. Those of unpretentious habits allayed the pangs of appetite by recourse to the cake man, who daily made the rounds of the larger establishments, which he could do in a short time without hurrying. A cent (usually 9 the size of a half dollar) bought a “horse,” two “lady” or a round ginger cake, which, as a rule, proved sufficient for one of moderate wants; two cents expended meant a feast, and he who laid out so much as a nickel, even if others than himself were included in the treat, posed as a man of wealth.

Of hotels, there were the Spotswood, at Eighth and Main (whose burning Christmas morning, 1870, is told elsewhere); the Exchange and Ballard, between Fourteenth and Mayo on Franklin, connected by a bridge over the latter thoroughfare; the St. Charles, at Fifteenth and Main; the St. James, on Twelfth Street, between Main and Franklin; the American, afterwards the Hotel Dodson, now the Lexington, Twelfth and Main; Ford's, formerly the Powhatan House, Broad at Eleventh (where the boys now play ball), and the St. Claire, at Ninth and Grace, site of the Richmond Hotel. No hotels were west of Ninth Street for nearly twenty years after the burning of the Spotswood.

The schools fared no better than other institutions. Central School for years occupied the Davis mansion, until the building became the Confederate Museum, and a new structure erected on an adjoining lot. The first high school held its sessions in a large building running from Broad to Capitol between Ninth and Tenth, just west of the temporary City Hall. The classes occupied the third floor, until the city provided a new building at 805 East Marshall, now used for administration purposes. The offices of the system were for years at Twelfth and Clay. Leigh is unchanged. Bellevue, for several decades at Twenty-second and Broad, fulfilled a splendid mission, later moving around to Grace Street, on the site of the old Van Lew homestead. Bethel, on Twentieth Street, between Main and Cary, had in the palmy days of the republic been the warehouse of John Enders, and then, in turn, a junk shop and seaman's 10 chapel. Madison, on Cary near the street from which it took its name, for many years enjoyed the distinction of being the one farthest west. In

the language of the street today, some of these buildings, especially those constructed for other purposes, were something “fierce.” The first school attended by me did not have a sewer connection, but the multiplication tables learned there are still serving me well.

Places of amusement were sparse, which might be expected of a city which, in 1877, claimed 87,000 inhabitants, of which 44,850 were credited with being church members and Sunday school scholars. The old Marshall Theatre, named for the Chief Justice, through whose influence it had been erected in 1817, stood at the southeast corner of Seventh and Broad; Mozart Hall, previously Assembly Hall (now the Academy), built of wood with a round top primarily for a skating rink; Metropolitan Hall, on the north side of Franklin, between Governor and Fourteenth; Putnam's Theatre Comique (“Put's”), not generally mentioned in polite society, a concession to the underworld. Old Trinity Church, south side of Franklin near Mayo, served for some time as a playhouse, mostly for negroes. A venture of 1888 consisted of the opening of a “free and easy” next door to the City Hall on Broad Street. For a nickel you could purchase a glass of beer of a female waiter, and likely as not have her sit on your knee while you drank the beverage. Though not opposed to the cost of “low living,” the Whig, under my supervision, launched a vigorous wave of purity, and after the place had run one consecutive day Police Captain Angle took our hint and closed it. The Virginia Opera House stood on Ninth Street, opposite Bank, where the Real Estate Building now is.

The popular-price places of amusement appeared in the early eighties when the “Dime Museums” came into existence. 11 These flourished for years. The first in Richmond occupied Mozart Hall. To a performance here on the evening of March 13 (Friday), 1885, Cluverius took his cousin prior to throwing her into the reservoir. This had its private policeman, not a figurehead by any manner of means. John Johnson by name, he had served a term in the penitentiary for badly cutting a negro. As a result the “boys” stood in righteous fear of him. John figured in an episode one Christmas Eve (1885) which every one, except himself, found extremely humorous. He walked into Crawford & Lally's (a bar and pool-room on the south side of Broad between Sixth and Seventh), which (attention,

Dr. Peters) kept open 168 hours per week, fifty-two weeks in the year. John proceeded to make pronouncement. “George Isaacs is the best man in town and I can lick George Isaacs.” Among the admiring audience stood “Pop” Tate, then at his best, playing “catch” on the Richmond team. Never a word said “Pop,” but walking up to John laid him across a barrel (contents unmentionable this year of our Lord) and pummeled him in approved style. Query: How should “Pop” have been rated? “Pop” has fallen in evil ways. He is now a member of “the force.”

In the matter of railroad stations, Richmond had the scorn of the entire country. She did not have a brick depot until well in the eighties. In the language of the late Dr. William H. Taylor (speaking of girls) none of them were good, but some of them were a little less worse than others. Working from the bottom, the R., F. and P., old Byrd Street Station at Eighth, came first. In the tribe of disreputable structures it ranked easily king. Maybe some one would have hauled it away if it had been given him, but it is to be doubted if there were so poor a business man in the corporate limits as to have accepted that offer. A picture of that shack and the new station of the same road 12 on West Broad Street would prove attractive “reading matter.”

The Richmond and Danville Station, at Virginia and Cary, had just a slight shade more of class. The Richmond and York River, at Twenty-second and Dock, had nothing to be ashamed of—when compared with the other two. The Chesapeake and Ohio, at Sixteenth and Broad, presented just a little better appearance. It is a matter of record that it once received a coat of paint. Whitewash met the needs of the others.

For years the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac brought its Richmond passengers down Broad Street to Eighth. The freight depot was at Eighth and Broad (northwest) on the Colonial corner, and must have been well constructed, for the building still stands. On the east side of Eighth at Broad were the offices. A few feet to the east of these stood the passenger shed. When the company abandoned this portion of the property, S. H. Cottrell

used it for a coal and wood yard, after putting some improvements on it. To the west of the freight depot were the shops and turntable (now the Broadway Theatre).

The R., F. & P. had a stranglehold on the city of Richmond. One of the first roads built in the South (1845), for years it ran its trains by steam power down the center of Broad Street. The rails were on a bank several feet above the roadway, much to the detriment of the thorough-fare. A Richmond woman, writing in 1846, calls it “Railroad Street.” In April, 1873, the city began to grade. Efforts to stop the running of locomotives on this, the main retail street of the town, had failed repeatedly. In September of this year, the horses attached to a street car were frightened by an engine and, running away, killed Thomas Clemmitt and knocked down several ladies. A mob gathered that night and threatened to tear up the tracks. The 13 following year the use of steam was discontinued on Broad Street, after a fight of thirty years. For some time after this the cars were hauled down Broad Street by horses, with a negro driver blowing a tin horn on the front platform. By some special dispensation of Providence no accidents occurred with this motive power. Each fall, at the time of holding the State Fair, locomotives pulled trains to and fro. This continued until the eighties. As a matter of fact, the track remained in Broad Street until after the new City Hall had been completed in 1893.

A peculiar and convenient custom existed in connection with the steamers from New York up to about forty years ago. When a boat neared the wharf a cannon on board was fired. This could be heard all over the city and gave the carriages (“hacks”), which met the passengers and parties having business there, an opportunity to be at the landing by the time the vessel had been made fast.

Those who stand on the corner these days and complain of “rotten” street car service should have been here in 1878. A writer of that year thus describes the route. “From Twenty-seventh and Main to Ninth, to Broad, to Laurel, to Morton's Flower Garden” (Reservoir and Main). No cars west of Ninth on Main; none west of Laurel or east of Ninth on Broad. The fare first ten cents, went to eight, then six, to five. At the latter

figure the service began to pay and improvement followed. Before this, those in a hurry walked. In 1887, the first electric railway line, which proved a commercial possibility, came into being in Richmond. (Up to this time there had not been a vehicle in this city using electricity or gasoline, nothing speedier than a two-wheeled “Gurney.” Ten years or more after this automobiles made their first appearance.) Representing a newspaper, it fell to me to ride on the second car that ran over the tracks. These unloaded at Elba, minus 14 motors, and were drawn by horses to Seventh, thence to Franklin, round the Capitol Square, down Franklin to Twenty-first, and so on to the barns. When our car reached Governor and Franklin, in response to vigorous signals, it stopped. The gamblers, who foregathered at the Davis House at that point, had made a bet as to its seating capacity, and it had to be settled forthwith.

Prior to 1875, there was not a monument in Richmond, except the Washington, and that had not been completed, the battle-pieces at the base of the figures and the fence around the whole not having been erected. A statue of Henry Clay stood in the Statehouse grounds, but the boys treated it badly, so the authorities had it carried indoors. It is now again in the open near Ninth and Franklin, after being given a new pair of hands. Houdon's Washington and a bust of Lafayette were in the rotunda of the Capitol.

Richmond has probably made more progress in telephones than in any other utility. In March, 1879, an exchange opened in the Piedmont and Arlington Building, northeast corner Main and Ninth. This and the company offices were reached by the first passenger elevator installed in Richmond. A writer at that time expressed the belief that some day it would be possible for Richmond business men to sit in their offices and talk to people in New Orleans and New York. Some prophet, that. In 1880 there were 300 phones in the city. January 1, 1920, there were 25,663.

There have been many changes in the churches in the last forty years. These have always been in the forefront. They were never slow to follow the members of their congregations. The prosperity of the individual has invariably been reflected in the edifice in which he

worshiped. Monumental, First Baptist, Second Presbyterian, Broad Street Methodist, St. Paul's, and of course St. John's, 15 are about the only ones which have held to their old homes. First Presbyterian, in order that the city could have the entire square for its new City Hall, was re-erected in its original form at Madison and Grace.

State, Federal and municipal buildings have changed almost beyond recognition since 1870. A wing has been erected on each side of the original Capitol. The new Library building, in addition, enables nearly all the State officers to be housed in promixity. Formerly they were scattered. The Federal structure has been doubled by taking in the Sharer site at the corner of Tenth. The greatest improvement of all has been in the municipal building. The old City Hall, on the Eleventh Street end of the present location, erected early in the nineteenth century, being condemned as unsafe, in 1874 went the way of all flesh, and was razed to the ground. From then until 1893, which marked the completion of the present building, a one-story barn, running from Broad to Capitol, between Ninth and Tenth, served as a city hall. A contemporary has described it as being temporary and inexpensive. He hit the nail on the head in both particulars, yet it served its purpose. The present municipal edifice is a matter of pride, in more than one respect. Built on the day-labor plan, it represents, first and last, including furnishing, an expenditure of about $1,700,000. Honest mistakes were made which cost much money, but possibly it is one of the few instances when such a sum was spent with no malfeasance or graft. This is explained by the statement that Colonel Wilfred E. Cutshaw, the City Engineer, and the most upright of men, supervised the work.

Richmond has always been a literary and publishing center. To say nothing of the greatest newspaper writer of them all, Edgar Allan Poe, there were Pleasants, Ritchie, Graeme, Daniel and others of like ilk, all long before my 16 day. In 1870, the Enquirer and Whig, both of them able and old, were in existence, the former suspending shortly after. The more recently founded Dispatch flourished and outlived its two more elderly contemporaries. For nearly forty years from its birth it easily led all the others, to be consolidated comparatively recently with the Times, founded in 1886. The afternoon

papers of this period were the State Journal and Evening News. After a brief existence, they consolidated, taking both names. In 1876, the State began publication, and ere long had the afternoon field to itself. In the late seventies or early eighties, W. L. Royall published The Commonwealth for a short time. Like all his work it was well done. During read-juster days, 1881, General Williams C. Wickham financed the Debt Payer, a weekly. It lasted until its purpose had been served. From the late seventies until '89 or '90, Dr. G. Watson James and R. A. Brock published the Richmond Standard, weekly. Superbly edited, it did not survive, because Richmond had more serious matters than literature to think of. In 1888, Benjamin P. Owen began publishing the Manchester Evening Leader. A cruel punster, in describing the venture, expressed it thus: “He started the Leader and has ‘Ben Owen’ ever since.” His brother, Thomas E., a natural wit. associated with him. Later on the Leader moved to this side of the river, and eventually changed hands. A little later John L. Williams began the publication of the Evening News. The two papers consolidated, the result being the News-Leader, with the largest circulation ever enjoyed by a Virginia paper. The Evening Journal, the youngest in the afternoon field, is strong and lusty. The Virginian is the last comer in the morning field.

The State, edited originally by John Hamden Chamberlayne and R. F. Beirne, enjoys the unique experience of having been the pioneer in the matter of skyscrapers. Its 17 first office, at Ninth and Main, stood on the site of the First National Bank Building. Its second home, on South Tenth Street, is where the Times-Dispatch Building now is. The skyscraper also is a growth of the last twenty years.

When Richmond celebrated Yorktown Centennial, in October, 1881, a few are lights were installed as a part of the decorations, so to speak. In 1886 street electric lights were put up, but some years elapsed before residences were equipped with incandescents.

The flood of October, 1870, washed Mayo's Bridge away, leaving the cities of Richmond and Manchester unconnected so far as foot and vehicular traffic were concerned. A similar state of affairs had existed in 1865, when our army, upon its retreat, burnt the same

structure. When the Federal troops entered Richmond they built a pontoon to the foot of Seventeenth. Not wishing a recurrence, in 1874 the cities of Richmond and Manchester built the Free Bridge, so called because toll had to be paid on the other.

18

I Start to See a Hanging.

Providence (or, is it the one not usually mentioned in polite society which is the patron saint of journalism?) must have intended me for a newspaper man. My initiation, so to speak, took place at the tender age of five “going on” six.

A connection of the family started out with me to see Albert Taylor, a negro who had poisoned a woman, hung. These pleasant functions in those days were generally held near the Central (now C. & O.) shops. Disappointment and my old nurse overtook me before we had gone a block. College Hill, named for the Medical College of Virginia which overlooked it, at Fourteenth and Marshall Streets, afforded a bird's eye view of the impending festivities, for as such were hangings then regarded. A crowd of some size had gathered on the brow of the declivity, largely made up of professors and students from the near-by halls of learning.

“Mr. Sim (Hart), do you want that child to have brain (!) fever?” shouted my old mammy. Such a prognosis from without their ranks elicited a roar of laughter from the assembled medicos. It is needless to say I did not join in the merriment, being led away in disgrace. This hanging took place on Saturday, May 29, 1869. Hangman's Day in Virginia had before and since been Friday, and why Judge Burnham, of the Hustings Court, violated this precedent never became known.

The features attending this execution were particularly disgusting. Taylor, sitting on his coffin, in a wagon, guarded by forty-eight armed policemen, was paraded through the streets. Four or five thousand people viewed 19 the hanging from the surrounding hills. The dead body swung in the air, in full view of all, for twenty minutes. This seems to have

been the first appearance of John Jasper before the public, he attending the condemned man and offering prayer on the scaffold. The minister did not “have much” on Taylor, who delivered a rambling address of thirty minutes. The scaffold used had been built for Jeter Phillips. This hanging, possibly the last public one in Virginia, helped hasten the passage of the law forbidding executions in the open.

Evidently, my memory is above the average, for it goes back clearly to a year earlier than this. My recollection of the burning of Butler's crockery store, on the north side of Main Street, two or three doors east of Thirteenth, is very vivid. A wooden walkway had been built in Franklin Street between Thirteenth and Fourteenth, the structures destroyed by the evacuation fire of April 3, 1865, not having been replaced. This, just one block in the rear of the conflagration, which occurred at night, offered a splendid point of vantage from which to view it. Early the next morning I went down for a closer inspection. The building had been gutted, but, strange to say, in the left show window intact stood a china rooster with a receptacle beneath, used for keeping boiled eggs warm on the breakfast table. My old friend, Oliver Mountcastle, whose connection with the first department ended in the eighties, and who had belonged to it from the time to which the mind of man ran not to the contrary, informed me some years since that the Butler fire occurred in 1868.

Another event of the year 1868, of which my recollection is perfect, is the shooting on November 24th of H. Rives Pollard by James Grant. Pollard, the editor of the Southern Opinion, published a paragraph which reflected terribly on a member of the Grant family. The Opinion 20 had its office on the second floor of the building at the northwest corner of Main and Fourteenth Streets. John W. Fergusson & Son had a printing office here for many years. The California Store, with a big gold beehive for a sign, occupied the ground floor. Grant stationed himself on the opposite side of Fourteenth Street, in the second story of the building now occupied by the Capital City Lunch. When Pollard appeared Grant emptied the contents of both barrels of his gun, loaded with buckshot, into him, death ensuing immediately. My nurse, in company with numerous others of her calling, as a reward for my good behavior that day, took me down and let me look at the shot marks on

the wall. These were visible until a few years since, the building being razed to make room for a modern structure, at present occupied by the Epes-Fitzgerald Paper Co.

Interest in the murder by Jeter Phillips of his wife in February, 1867, held the public attention for some time. Phillips had been a soldier in the Confederate army. Being wounded, he married the lady who had nursed him to health. One Sunday afternoon they went walking, he returning alone. Some time elapsed before the finding of the body, and yet more went by before its identification. The case excited much interest. First and last Phillips received the death sentence thirteen times, the hanging finally taking place in the jail yard of Henrico County, July 22, 1870.

Policeman James some years ago told me that Phillips endeavored to borrow his pistol. A small parlor pistol was the weapon used, the bullet from which did not penetrate the skull. He choked and beat his victim to death.

21

The Year of Calamity.

Eighteen hundred and seventy has been called by a local writer (Carlton McCarthy, I think,) the year of calamity. On April 27th occurred what is known as the “Capitol Disaster.” The Supreme Court of the State intended to hand down a decision in the case of Chahoon vs. Ellyson for the mayoralty of Richmond. The former held office by virtue of military appointment and the latter had been elected by the council. An immense crowd filled the court room, immediately over the hall of the House of Delegates. Fortunately, the latter body did not meet until a later hour, of the loss of life would probably have been much greater. Over a hundred people were killed and injured. Funerals were held continuously for nearly a week, the supply of carriages and hearses being limited. Memorial services took place in all the churches, and many buildings were draped with mourning. Cities North and South came to the relief of our people, sending us over $80,000. The war had ended only five years before, and Richmond's cup of misery seemed full to the brim. The

expression of sympathy from elsewhere heartened our people, and they realized that they were still a part of this great country. Judge George L. Christian has published an interesting pamphlet on this calamity.

In October, 1870, occurred the first great freshet after the war. The water backed up in Main Street to the St. Charles Hotel, at Fifteenth, and boats plied to and fro, as far as Eighteenth. A granite marker placed at this corner contained a bronze plate, with an inscription and arrow showing the height to which the water attained. Believing 22 this to be a poor advertisement in the heart of the business section, the city removed the stone to another location.

While the waters were raging, on October 12th, General Robert E. Lee died at his home in Lexington, Va. Telegraphic and other communication with that point had been rendered well nigh impossible by the flood. The Richmond Dispatch announced this event of surpassing importance in a six-line telegram. Never has Richmond exhibited such grief. Not only public buildings, but hundreds of residences were draped in mourning.

Lexington being cut off from the outside world, how to procure a casket for the burial of the Southern chieftain became a serious problem. It is said a coffin, washed from some warehouse up the river, floated down the stream just in time to be used. This story I told on a street car going down town one morning several years ago. Much to my surprise, some weeks later a high school teacher, whom I did not know had heard me relate the circumstance, told me she had investigated it and found it true. Only one answer could be possible: “Certainly it is true, otherwise I should not have related it.”

Early Christmas morning, this same year, fire destroyed the Spotswood Hotel, occupying a half block, at the southeast corner of Eighth and Main. Several lives were lost, notably that of Samuel D. Hines, a Knight of Pythias. Hines made his escape from the burning building, and remembered that a brother Knight whom he knew to be there had not made his appearance. He returned to the burning structure and in an effort to effect a rescue

lost his life. It is a pity to spoil so splendid a story, but truth compels the statement that the brother, in endeavoring to rescue whom Hines lost his life, had been in the hotel for an immoral purpose. This fire should have been a warning to me not to enter the journalistic field, for the first our 23 family heard of it was when a messenger came post haste to the residence Of Bosanquet W. Gillis, one of the editors of the State Journal, who lived just opposite, to come down and help get out a special edition. Even at so early an age it struck me as tough luck to have to work on Christmas Day, especially when it fell on Sunday. It is a coincidence worthy of note that the burning of Richmond College happened exactly forty years later. The latter also occurred on Christmas morning (1910), which likewise fell on Sunday.

The first public free school opened in Richmond in the fall of 1870, in the basement of the old Beth Ahabah Synagogue, on Eleventh Street, near Marshall. Three schools comprised the group. James H. Binford was superintendent and J. D. Crump principal. The latter had only one arm, but the boys gained nothing by reason thereof. With a twist of the leg he had complete mastery of his victim, and many a middle-aged solid citizen of today will bear testimony to its being not a case of fifty-fifty, but of one hundred per cent efficiency. That this school should have been organized just at a time when I became of school age is another proof of the fact that bad luck pursues one from the cradle. He who called it a “year of calamity” knew whereof he wrote.

24

How I Became a Citizen of the United States.

Something less than twenty years ago a new registration, under the recently adopted constitution was had throughout the State.

“Are you a native of the United States?” queried an official.

“No, sir,” I replied.

“Where were you born?”

“In Richmond.”

The clerk looked puzzled, and asked me to repeat my answer.

“What year?” queried Robert Lee Traylor, the registrar.

“Eighteen hundred and sixty-three.” Then the clerk had it carefully explained to him that in 1863 Richmond happened to be within the bounds of the Confederate States of America.

My experience in this particular is possibly more unique than that of many people. It is not everyone who remembers the exact moment when he became one of the greatest people in the world.

At noon on January 27, 1870, while playing at home the firing of cannon could be heard in the State house grounds, two blocks away. They told me Virginia was being “fired back into the Union.” The salute consisted of 100 guns, the firing taking place in eight minutes on the plot in the Square overlooking the Federal Building. On this identical spot, nearly nine years before, the Fayette Artillery of Richmond had sent forth in a like manner the message which announced to the world that Virginia had seceded. To digress for a moment. Four years of war 25 called for five years of reconstruction. The people of Virginia were admittedly intelligent and cultured, much ahead of the defeated nations of Europe of today. If it took longer to reconstruct such a people than it did to conquer them, evidently there is little reason to complain of the slowness of reconstruction in Europe.

General Canby had been the military commandant of this district for some time. It so happened that his headquarters were next door to my father's house on Twelfth Street, in the old Yancey mansion, used for the past forty years and more by the Retreat for the Sick. The general had a large, white horse. He would ride up to the front door, and dismounting throw the reins to his orderly, who would lead the charger away. At the

crossing of Twelfth and Marshall, the soldier would beckon me, and upon my running out he would put me into the saddle, holding the animal with one hand and me with the other. Down Marshall to the alley, thence to the stable in the yard of the mansion he would carefully guide the two of us. The “Yankees” (as they were invariably called) were mighty good to me, loading me with hardtack, red tape and gum drops. On Christmas and Fourth of July they had unlimited pop crackers, about the only people in the city who did. Most of them were men of family, and had been away from home for some time. Upon me they vicariously bestowed the attentions they wished for their own children. The Northern soldier for me never had horns, and, unlike Mozis Addums' Virginian, damn was not a part of his name. Poor General Canby, shortly afterwards, he met his death treacherously at the hands of the Indians in the West while conducting a peace parley with them.

In reconstruction days poverty held sway over a large part of the city. A man who has since been Mayor told me several years ago that when he returned to 26 Richmond from the army at the close of the war one of his greatest financial problems consisted in raising seventy-five cents to pay for half-soling his shoes. The present generation will never understand what it meant to our city when Military District No. 1 ceased to exist and the sovereign State of Virginia once more reigned supreme.

27

Killed in the John Marshall House.

A peculiar fatal accident occurred in the John Marshall House, on the street of that name at Ninth, on the evening of Friday, May 4, 1877. Coming up Broad Street that afternoon, a servant of Miss Ella Myers, who for years resided on Broad Street, just opposite Monumental Church, called and asked me to please run and tell my aunt that Miss Harriet Myers had fallen down the steps and killed herself. My aunt and myself went at once to the house and found the unfortunate lady lying dead on the floor. She had, in descending the stairs, missed the last step and, striking her head against the wall, killed herself instantly. It

being the Sabbath, in accordance with the orthodox Jewish custom, the body was carried home on a hand litter.

28

The Last Cowhiding.

Just as the Mordecai-McCarty duel sounded the death knell of the “code of honor” in Virginia, so did the Poindexter case put a stop to the practice of cowhiding in this State.

This affair occurred March 3, 1879, and proved particularly deplorable, as the parties to it were members of prominent families. Curtis, the victim, was a clerk in the retail shoe store of Wingo, Ellet & Crump, at the northeast corner of Tenth and Main, the west end of the present postoffice. In helping a lady into her carriage, she claimed that he squeezed her hand, having previously remarked to her when trying on a shoe, “What a pretty little foot.” This behavior she reported to her affianced, Poindexter. Armed with a cowhide, the latter visited the store and administered that chastisement which Virginia gentlemen from time immemorial claimed should be reserved for animals only.

After the assault Curtis visited his counsel, Frank H. McGuire, who advised him to seek Poindexter with a double-barrel shot gun and pull down on both triggers at the same time. Curtis, a powerful man, disdained the use of a deadly weapon. Armed only with a stick he sought Poindexter at his place of business and demanded an apology. This being refused Curtis advanced and struck several blows with the cane. Retreating as far as he could, Poindexter finally pulled his pistol and firing killed his assailant.

A hard-fought legal battle ensued. The prisoner claimed to be within the law, in that when he had been attacked 29 he had retreated as far as he could before firing. The court decided that the two events must be considered together, and that a man who cowhided another could not claim self-defense when attacked in turn.

Poindexter received a two-year term in prison, before going to which he married the lady in question. George D. Wise was Commonwealth's Attorney at the time and prosecuted the case vigorously. The opening remarks of his argument were very dramatic: “I had rather be Curtis dead than Poindexter living.” When the court passed sentence upon him, Poindexter stated he would gladly give his life if, by so doing, he could have restored Curtis's.

Shortly afterwards the Legislature of Virginia passed a law making cowhiding a felony, and this particular mode of corporeal punishment has ceased to exist.

30

The Times and Page McCarty.

The McCarty-Mordecai duel was fought May 9, 1873. The principals with their surgeon and seconds met early one morning in a field near Oakwood. The old traditions of the code duello were violated, and instead of standing back to back and wheeling at the word of command, the two belligerents faced each other at a distance of thirty feet and fired point blank. Both were terribly wounded at the second fire. There were no ambulances in the city at that time, and the wounded men lay on the ground for several hours while the surgeons and seconds pulled planks from a near-by fence and with pen knives cut them down to a proper length to reach from seat to seat in the “hacks,” so the belligerents could be brought home in a recumbent position. The surgeons and seconds were arrested and jailed for some time. Mordecai died May 14th. Some time elapsed before bail could be procured. McCarty's trial resulted in a verdict of manslaughter, but owing to his condition, Governor Kemper pardoned him. It is needless to say that after this McCarty had quite a reputation, and there were few who cared to incur his displeasure. The affair had one good effect. It caused the abolition of duelling in Virginia.

When the Law and Order League decided to publish a newspaper (The Times) in 1886, Page McCarty was made its editor-in-chief, James A. Gentry its local editor and yours

truly reporter in general. It was my first real venture into journalistic fields. Gentry (“Truthful Jeems”) was a character. A veteran of the War Between the States, the Elliott Grays and the Male Orphan Asylum were his 31 favorite themes, and a source of consolation on dull days. Anything concerning the latter invariably carried the head, “For Sweet Charity's Sake.” It is to be hoped that dear old James A. received the charity he so invariably preached.

Gentry had a story he enjoyed telling, about a Confederate soldier who had been drummed out of Camp Lee (how history repeats), Allison and Broad, where Putney's now is, for drunkenness. Down Broad Street to Ninth, to Main, to Fourteenth, to Mayo's Bridge, they went, corporal's guard, drummer and fife, the “Rogues' March” playing. On the bridge they left him. Sadly he stood and watched the return of the disreputable crowd, all of whom were in rags. “If I ain't fit (hic) to associate with that crowd,” he remarked sadly, “what the hell (hic) am I fit for?”

Of course, every one in the office stood in righteous fear of Captain McCarty. To my utter surprise, he seemed as gentle as a woman. My intercourse with him consisted to a great extent in procuring theatre tickets to his liking, generally box seats. On one occasion he treated me a trifle rough. The Times that morning had announced the giving of a dance in one of the suburbs of Richmond by two young ladies of little importance from a society standpoint. Pointing to the offending item, he remarked: “Mr. Ezekiel, please do not publish any more such hog-wash as this in this paper.”

There is little doubt that McCarty never had a moment's happiness after the duel and that he deliberately sought death. There lived in Richmond a politician who had the reputation of loving to fight. In fact, it had been declared that on one occasion he had traveled hundreds of miles to meet his antagonist. In an editorial one morning McCarty called him a jackass, with apologies to the dumb animal. 32 Mr. Fire-Eater made no reply whatever. He knew McCarty would fight.

Beneath his stern exterior McCarty carried the kindest of hearts. Once when he came across a negro teamster worrying a little newsboy, he whipped his hand around to his hip-pocket and bade him desist. And the darky certainly did.

Probably the best story told of McCarty is this: One Sunday morning he visited Hungerford's saloon, south side of Broad Street, between Eighth and Ninth, accompanied, as usual by Jim, “Buck” (W. L.) Royall's dog. Two young men entered the bar after him and, according to his custom, Jim, though old and minus teeth, snapped at them. One of the entrants kicked at him. McCarty threw his hand around to his hip, and commanded the young man to apologize to Jim. He refused to do so, and McCarty reiterated his demand. At this juncture, Hungerford leaned over the bar and whispered to the youngster that this was Major McCarty, who had killed Mordecai in a duel. Profuse apologies were forthcoming to Jim, who needless to say gave no sign as to whether he accepted or rejected the overtures. Having done as he had been told, the young man turned to McCarty and remarked: “Major, we do not think you have treated us exactly right, but to show we have no ill will, won't you join us in a drink?” “No, sir,” replied McCarty; “I do not drink with any damned cattle that apologizes to a dog.”

The duel, it should be stated, arose from a certain little piece of poetry, which reflected very strongly upon a Richmond belle. Meeting subsequently at the club, Mordecai, the heavier of the two men, knocked McCarty down. Hence the duel. It may be interesting to some readers to know that the lady in question married a third party.

33

Muchly Married Marvin.

The case of Marvin, in the eighties, is unique in that a Richmond lady of high standing fell victim to a gay deceiver of an aged bigamist. Marvin, under the name of Merritt, at the time of his marriage had several (exactly how many, never appeared) other wives living.

Bestowed by some gentleman of alliterative turn the title of the “Muchly Married Marvin” became his.

Marvin's advent preceded my initiation into the journalistic arena. Colonel W. D. Chesterman, local editor of the Dispatch, appointed me on a reception committee to greet Marvin upon his discharge from the penitentiary. This function took place on a Monday morning at the ungodly hour of six. There were no cross town cars in those days, rendering it necessary to arise long before that time. Marvin had proved himself a grand old rascal, with plenty of sense. He either designed or helped to design the woman's building while a prisoner. At his trial, he made an entirely new plea: “By advice of my counsel, I plead guilty.”

Marvin's discharge came promptly as per schedule. Policeman Powell was the other member of the committee on reception, representing the city and State. The elderly miscreant seemed to take a fancy to me at sight and became real confidential. “Juneval was a master of literature, Hogarth of caricature, but the Richmond newspapers have men who easily lead in both,” he began.

The trip to the station-house proved mostly uneventful. As we neared it, Policeman Powell called my attention to the fact that Mrs. Flynn, a lady of few words, and those to the point, was approaching.

“Top of the morning to ye, Mr. Powell, and where might ye be going?”

“To see my girl, Mrs. Flynn.”

“To see your girl, is it? And isn't it one wife that's enoof for ony mon?”

Loss of sleep had rendered me stupid, and we had reached the station-house before smiles began to wreathe my face. But Powell thought his confidence had been violated

when the colloquy was published and never spoke to me again. Marvin remarked that his mouth tasted like a “stale Thanksgiving.” That afternoon he left Richmond, being escorted to the depot by an officer, an older, if not a better man, than when he came to our fair city.

35

A Speech That Was Not Made.

Among my very pleasant experiences is included a trip to Gettysburg in 1887, upon the occasion of the first visit of the survivors of Pickett's Division. Leaving here on Saturday, July 2d, the train, as far as possible, followed the route taken by Lee's army upon the occasion of its visit to Pennsylvania, twenty-four years before. Little or no demonstration occurred at any point, until Chambersburg, a place which had suffered from the war, had been reached. Here an ovation awaited us. One man jumped on our car, while in motion, and grasping my hand, exclaimed: “Sir, I am proud to take one of Pickett's men by the hand.” Acknowledging the compliment, a disclaimer followed by telling him that my existence on this mundane sphere had begun a month and a half after the battle. “I was in arms during the war, but not at the fight.”

“Well, I thought you looked pretty young, but I know you had some young ones on your side.”

“Yes, but not quite so young as that.”

Arriving at Gettysburg a little after dark, Pickett's men were drawn up in a line and opposite them the survivors of the Philadelphia Brigade, which received and helped to repel the famous charge. “Advance and shake hands,” rang out the command, and the first reunion on a battlefield of the war had begun.

The formal welcome took place in the town hall. The chief burgess made a brief speech. “Boys, we are glad to see you—this time.” E. Payson Reeve, commander of Pickett Camp, tried to reply. He broke down and wept openly, and there were none ashamed. The

address of the 36 evening, by Colonel William R. Aylett, captured the audience. Just as he began, some one called out, “How about those flags?” referring to the discussion that had recently occurred anent the return of Confederate flags to the various Southern States, which had been violently and bitterly opposed at the North. It looked like a case of back home for us, when Color-Bearer Cogbill, of Chesterfield, sprang into a chair and waved Old Glory. “The flag of our fathers is good enough for us,” exclaimed Colonel Aylett, and then pandemonium broke loose.

The speech which he made contained little of platitudes. It came from the heart, and its reception cannot be described. At its conclusion he paused. “Boys,” said he, “I am going to tell you a secret, this is not the speech I intended to make, a copy of which I gave to the Associated Press and will appear in the papers tomorrow.”

“Of course, it ain't,” yelled a lank Yank, “there it is in your pocket; you haven't looked at it.”

After the meeting we were marched hither and yon in an effort to find lodging. Gettysburg, a small town, had its limitations. The search became monotonous, and finally seeing a vacant lot across the street, Logan Robins despairingly remarked, “I had just as lief go over there and sleep in that field.”

“All well enough for you, Mr. Robins, but remember, you are the only policeman in the crowd.” All laughed, except Robins, and soon we have found shelter.

Sunday following contained a crowded program A monument erected by the Sixty-ninth and Seventy-first Pennsylvania regiments gives the Confederates all the credit they could desire. There is a regulation forbidding the erection of Confederate memorials within the Federal lines. They are not needed after this. That day General “Baldy” Smith, chairman of the battlefield commission, in speaking 37 to Pickett's men, referred to this inhibition with regret. “Boys, after what I have seen this morning, you can come right down to Philadelphia and put up your monuments in Independence Hall.” Such fellowship

as existed that day is hard to imagine. Colonel Aylett and a Northern veteran actually swapped shirts.

My second visit to Gettysburg occurred in 1906, when General Armistead's sword was returned to his men. Mrs. Pickett spoke on this occasion. The portion of the grounds where the ceremony took place is known as the high-water mark of rebellion. Here is located a marker which reads: “Brigadier-General Lewis A. Armistead fell here July 3, 1863.” There is no sting in the word rebellion when applied by a Government liberal and broad-minded enough to erect a monument to a man who fell fighting against it.

The next morning, Sunday, an ex-Confederate tried to persuade a Northern veteran to drink with him. The Yank seemed, a little doubtful as to entering a bar on Sunday. Seeing his friend's hesitation, the Johnny Reb said persuadingly: “Come on, Yank, don't be afraid; Stonewall Jackson ain't going to slip around and take you in the rear.”

This same afternoon there came to me what, with my strong Southern proclivities, seemed the greatest of honors. While the two parties were at the “Bloody Angle,” against which Pickett's charge had been directed, my old friend, Dr. C. W. P. Brock, insisted on my coming forward and telling a story related some years before by Rev. M. D. Hoge with regard to a Bible he gave General Jubal A. Early. To have spoken to veterans of both armies at the most historic spot on American soil has been a wonderful remembrance for me.

38

It Made a Difference.

Colonel Robert Beverly, of The Plains, Fauquier County, President of the Virginia Agricultural Society, always impressed me as the connecting link between the ideal Virginia gentleman of past and present days. Handsome, portly, with massive shoulders, gray hair and long mustache of the same color, ruddy of cheek, the manners of a courtier, the tout ensemble became complete when he doffed his broad-brimmed soft hat

associated with the Southerner of palmy days. In October, 1886, just as my newspaper career was about to begin, having a few days on my hands, George W. Mayo, secretary of the society, pressed me into service. Mayo, a very modest and diffident man, forced upon me all the honors of his position, consisting mostly of an enormous red silk badge, which received instant recognition all over the Fair Grounds, and a “hack” to carry me where he willed. Thursday, the big day of the fair, found me, my badge and carriage on the job. The first duty to be discharged was a commission from Colonel Beverly. “Mr. E.,” said he in his most courtly manner, “take my demijohn and go down to Cranz's and tell him to send me two gallons of the ‘best’ he has in the store.” A perfect gentleman's order, that; so with the jug on one seat and me on the other the commission received prompt attention. Returning, Police Sergeant Gibson stopped the whole outfit at the entrance to the enclosure, a portion of the ground where the crowd of people on foot held forth. My demand came insistent, “Secretary's own badge and carriage, good anywhere, any time.”

39

“Colonel Beverly's own orders. No conveyances in this enclosure after 10 o'clock today.”

“Don't care. Colonel Beverly's own demijohn. Bet you two to one we go through.”

Proceeding on foot, my arrival found the Colonel discussing important matters with members of the board.

“Colonel, they have stopped my carriage at the entrance to the enclosure.”

“Perfectly correct, sir. Those are my orders.”

“Colonel, your demijohn is in it.”

“That's different, sir; that's different. Tell Brad Beverly that I say for him and another aide to go down and bring up that carriage.”

And they did, with me and the jug in it. Glorious days those. Brad Beverly is now lord of the manor at “The Plains,” and during the world war the papers told how another Brad Beverly (the II.) did a man's part in France.

40

Cluverius, a Celebrated Case.

Of all the causes celebre which first and last have held the stage in Richmond, that of Thomas Judson Cluverius easily takes first place. The papers all over the country followed the case closely and thousands of columns were printed about it.

On the morning of Saturday, March 14, 1885, the body of Fannie Lillian Madison, a cousin of Cluverius, was found floating in the Old Reservoir. Days went by before identification became sure, the corpse being repeatedly recognized as that of some person who would speedily be produced and prove, as in the case of Mark Twain, that the report of her death had been greatly exaggerated. The unfortunate girl had every reason to commit suicide, and for a long time that view prevailed. Indeed, Dr. Taylor, the city coroner, an expert in such matters, held that opinion to the last. Peter J. Burton, a Dispatch man, first advanced the theory of murder. For some time he stood alone, but finally proved his case. The coroner's inquest lasted for weeks, and rendered a verdict of murder by Thomas J. Cluverius. Some months elapsed before the case came to trial, no end of trouble being experienced in selecting a jury. Judge Thomas S. Atkins, who presided at the hearing in the Hustings Court, sent for the newspaper men. “Gentlemen,” he said, “there will be a decent report of this case or none.”

The gist of the testimony showed that the prisoner on Friday night, March 13th, had thrown the girl into the reservoir. Instead of sinking, as any well-behaved corpse would have done, the body persisted in floating, thus leading 41 to the theory of suicide. The net became tighter and tighter and the guilt of the prisoner appeared plain to the jury and most straight-

thinking people. There be many who never concur in a conviction through circumstantial evidence, believing that murder should be done in broad daylight in public places.

A notable array of counsel appeared on either side, and a more stubborn contest could not be conceived. Wearily the case dragged its length while the arguments in the papers, pro and con, would have made volumes. Some of the writers showed a familiarity with the case, most of them did not. But this made no difference, all was grist that came to the mill.

Notwithstanding the seriousness of the issue at stake there were many humorous incidents. For instance, Powhatan E. Dupuy, who came from the same part of the State as the victim, testified that for George Minter to have seen what he told about it would have been necessary for him to see through two mountains. We newspaper men knew that “Araminta” would be equal to such a feat. An advertising man, like faith, can move mountains. Henry R. Pollard, now City Attorney of Richmond, was of the counsel for the defense. He likes to tell the story of how Rev. Dr. Hatcher came to the court room with a friend one afternoon during the trial. By the way, admission was by card only, the same being signed by the judge. The visitor asked Dr. Hatcher not to point out the prisoner, as he flattered himself that he possessed sufficient acumen to pick him out. Entering the court room he pointed to Pollard, saying, “That is the man; I would hang him on his face.”

In the same case, Dr. William H. Taylor, City Coroner, and undoubtedly one of the most intelligent and witty men Virginia has ever produced, gave an answer that has become classic. Dr. Taylor always maintained it suicide, not 42 murder, and in upholding his stand had a wordy war with Attorney Brown Evans. In attempting to negative the doctor's evidence, the lawyer planned to give the professional man his coup de grace. So he said to him, referring to the witness being near-sighted, “Now, Dr. Taylor, without quibbling, will you please tell the jury in a direct answer just exactly how far you can see?”

The expert smiled quizzically, but replied without hesitation, “One hundred and ninety-six million miles.” He waited for the fraction of a minute for the answer to sink into the jury and

array of legal talent, and quietly continued, “I can see the sun, and the scientists tell us it is that distance from the earth.” And the subsequent questions were conspicuous by their absence.

A prolonged legal struggle resulted in a verdict of guilty. Of course, the case was carried to the State Supreme Court, which sustained the lower tribunal, despite the hundreds of exceptions which had been noted. Judge Drury A. Hinton, of Petersburg, filed a dissenting opinion. It was my fortune to be present when he handed this paper to the clerk of the court. “It is,” he said, “a perfect exposition of the prisoner's innocence.” As a matter of fact, the paper was by all regarded as weak. About this time the discussion in the papers, through the medium of “Communications,” broke out afresh. It was a dull day when a journal did not carry several columns of these.

Cluverius was hung on Friday, January 14, 1887, twenty-two months to a day from that on which the body was found. Notwithstanding the explicit injunction of the court, a large crowd attended, tickets to the jail being in demand as if to some unusual theatrical attraction. Incidentally, a few days later, Sergeant James C. Smith, the officer in charge, had a fine of $50 imposed upon him for contempt in allowing so large a number of spectators.

43

A silk rope of red and white had been provided, with the intention of subsequently cutting it up and selling the pieces as souvenirs. A special order from Governor Lee, who also forbade the sounding of an electric signal, as had been arranged for at the moment of springing the trap, put a stop to the proposed sale.

It was my first and only hanging. My hand rested on the rail of the scaffold, and the doomed man, when he took his place, stood within six feet of me. Sheriff J. W. Southward, of Henrico, who had officiated at numerous such functions, acted as master of ceremonies. His attention was directed by me to the fact, that sweet oil, which sunk into

the rope, instead of a cold grease, which would have facilitated the slipping of the noose, had been used. He replied by telling me that he had hung a large number of people and knew what he was doing. My prognosis proved correct. When the trap sprang the knot failed to work and the rope, notwithstanding the fact it had been tried out the previous afternoon with a number of sandbags, began slowly to stretch and continued to do so until the feet of the victim touched the ground. Deputy Sergeant Allen ascended the platform and pulled up the rope while the victim slowly strangled to death. The loop extended from his chin to fully eighteen inches above the head, and a slap in the face would have released him. Cluverius turned very red as the black cap was adjusted. My opinion is he never expected to be hung. He leaned over and whispered something to Sergeant Smith. Twenty years after the hanging I endeavored to have him tell me what was said, but he did not remember.

Now as to the psychology of the case. Like all crimes, Providence took a hand in its detection. The day of the murder Cluverius had the young woman to write a note dated the following day, the 14th. This he did by way of 44 providing an alibi. Had the body been found at some subsequent time, the accused could have shown this epistle and proved the victim alive on the 14th, on which day he was back home in Centreville. So much nerve had he that after committing the crime on Friday night, he conducted his Bible class in the Sunday school as usual on the 15th.

Captain Charles H. Epps who, with Policeman Logan S. Robins, made the arrest, gave me quite an interesting account of that event. They arrived about sunset. Captain Epps called Cluverius to the door as he was about to sit down to supper and said to him: “Cluverius, I have a warrant for your arrest for murder.” Had an innocent man been thus approached, his first words would have been: “Murder, who do they say I killed?”

He replied: “Wait until I get my hat and I will go with you.” The officers, however, ate supper with the family before leaving.

A most important link in the evidence proved to be a watch-key, that had been torn off in squeezing through what after became the famous “hole in the fence,” between the small-pox burying ground and the reservoir where the drowning took place. Incidentally, the accused had attended Richmond College, and this opening had been used by the students of that institution in going swimming in the river, it being the most direct route between the two points. When the arrest took place Epps glanced at the watch-chain and noticed that the ring on the end of the short piece hanging there had apparently been prized open. Looking again shortly after he noticed with surprise that the entire pendant had disappeared. He called attention to this, and at first Cluverious denied that there had been any such second piece of chain. Epps insisted that it had been there, and when they came to the ferry, about two miles from 45 where the arrest had been made, Cluverius' brother handed the officer the “missing links.”

That Cluverius committed murder admits of no dispute. Twelve men sworn to do their duty said he did. There were hundreds of connecting circumstances, no one of which would have proved the case, but taken in a mass they were overwhelming.

Cluverius greatly injured his own case. He made statement after statement that proved false. As late as the night before his hanging he sent word to Governor Lee that he had been in Richmond the night the crime had been committed, but to tell the true history of that evening would compromise a most estimable young lady. His excellency told the convicted man to have one of his counsel come to his office in the Capitol at night with the young woman in question, in a closed carriage, and no living person except himself should ever know it. The prisoner said he would have that done, but no one appeared.

Cluverius made no confession in direct words. The night before he expiated his offense, he asked his pastor, Dr. Hatcher, to read him from the Bible the chapter on blood guiltiness. A number of newspaper men were present when the cell, which had been sealed just prior to the hanging, was opened. Nothing that could throw any light on the case appeared. Among the contents I found a book with the name of a well-known

Richmond lady in it. When it reached her through my hands I read her a short but vigorous lecture upon the inadvisability of lending volumes with names in them to a condemned murderer.

The coolness of the man particularly impressed me. The last November of his life the Democrats failed to elect congressmen, with the exception of possibly two or three. In speaking of this, he remarked, “It is lucky we lost the State this year instead of next.”

46

The thought flashed through my mind, “What difference will next year make to you in kingdom come.” He allowed no such trifles to worry him. If he had, he would never had committed so cold-blooded a crime.

47

A Mean Assignment.

Of all the disagreeable tasks that have been assigned me the worst to my recollection consisted of trying to interview a young lady whose fiance had committed suicide the day before they were to have been married. Lewis Griffin, the man in the case, had the esteem and good will of all, and why he should have made way with himself excited untold wonder. The young woman, most estimable and lovely, had the sympathy of the entire community in her great trial. It happened to be my first day on the old Dispatch, a position that held much charm for every newspaper man. This had been my goal for several years. The Dispatch had news brought to it unsolicited that others could not get by going after. In the language of the day there were many who thought the sun rose and set in that office. My amazement can be better imagined than described, when the local editor, the most considerate of men as a rule, told me to go to the young lady's house and interview her. Goodness only knows what he expected her to say. But for the difficulty that had been encountered by me in obtaining a job on this paper, a refusal to obey orders would have been forthcoming. That my obedience and sense of duty (imaginary) should have triumphed has been to me a source of much regret. The legendary yellow dog felt

better than I did that night. My trip to the house proved devoid of interest. The interview, as should have been expected, did not materialize. There is one bright spot in the whole matter. Instead of kicking me out, as should have been done under the circumstances, I was met at the door by that courtly Virginia gentleman, 48 S. W. Travers, who evidently saw and sympathized with me in my embarrassment and degradation, and made my unpleasant mission less disagreeable than it deserved. This has been nearly thirty years ago, and if this series of rambling sketches do nothing more than express the life-long gratitude that Travers earned they wilt have served a good purpose.

But even so distasteful an experience as this had a touch of humor. The funeral took place the following day from St. James Church. Probably no such crowd had ever attended a similar function in this city. Admission proved impossible. Standing room within fifty feet could not be secured. Great difficulty attended the reporting of such a ceremonial. The imagination had to be drawn upon. In touching phrases were described the solemn service and the appearance of the young girl who on that day expected to be a bride. This did not seem sufficient; it needed another touch of tragedy. The god of things as they should have been came to the rescue, and the story went into detail as to the thrilling words of the sacred service beginning, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

And the next morning a copy of the paper appeared in my box, and around this particular paragraph there had been drawn a nice, bright blue ring, with a fist pointing to the margin, on which in a bold hand had been written in similar color: “Mr. E., this is omitted in case of suicide.” So my first day's experience on the Dispatch taught me something after all.

49

How I Did Not Lick Sullivan.

John Lawrence Sullivan, heavyweight champion of the world, visited Richmond in the early nineties. Unless my recollection be at fault, he posed as an actor, being a member of the “Willing Hearts and Hands” Company, which played at the Academy several nights.

Upon the day of his arrival John acted pretty ugly to the negro waiter at Murphy's Hotel, where he stopped. In fact, he cussed the darky good and proper. At the time the negro had a pot of coffee in his hand, and feeling outraged, let fly the receptacle and contents, taking the champion full in the face, and for once John Lawrence had his beverage nice and hot without the trouble of pouring, sans sugar and milk. With a roar Sullivan started for the waiter, and the latter made for the roof, and won by several lengths. Report had it that the negro did not come down until he saw the smoke of Sullivan's train several miles out of Richmond. The affair received my best attention, being served in most approved humorous style. Several persons were kind enough to compliment me, Langbourne Williams, in particular, saying it was the best piece of work done on a Richmond paper for many a day.

But the episode had a decided “kick” to it. The night after the article appeared, possibly as a joke, the local editor of the Dispatch sent me up to interview Sullivan. Imagine my feelings. As usual, John had on a most beautiful grouch. Fortunately, he did not recognize in me the artist of that morning's paper. For my part, the champion never had a chance to get between me and the door, and my overshoes were left at home.

50

The Policeman Cried!

Another heart-rending affair of thirty years ago was the arrest and conviction of L— B—, who had the administering of the Hanewinckel estate. Word came to the Dispatch office that a fiduciary of the Chancery Court had defaulted for a large amount, and to me the chief assigned the duty of investigation. The papers were being scanned when Judge S. B. Witt of the Hustings Court happened in the room. Asked the nature of my work, I made reply that B— had embezzled a large amount. The judge said he would issue a bench warrant at once, which he did, and the culprit was taken into custody that night.

Sergeant Junius A. Cosby made the arrest, and furnished me with an accurate description of the procedure. The story received the attention it demanded, and though it may sound conceited, evidently it was well done. That night the Sergeant came into the office. After commending my work, he paid me the still greater compliment of saying it brought tears to his eyes when he read it. As an officer he had done his duty dry-eyed, but when he read the story of how the little child had run up and put her arms about the father's neck and told him good night, it had made him feel worse than the actual arrest. I modestly replied that if the story would help prevent one man from committing a similar crime it would not have been written in vain.

The conviction of B— followed in due time. His guilt could have been proved by documentary evidence with little or no trouble. In the language of Marvin, he saved the court the trouble. When asked if he were innocent or 51 guilty, he replied: “By advice of my counsel, I plead guilty.”

A particularly sad feature attended this affair. B— was a partner in an insurance firm, the other member of which had a son who traveled pretty rapidly. Money placed in the safe from time to time disappeared, until finally the latter ran his son away from home. Afterwards it appeared it had not been this young man who robbed the safe.

52

The Barbara-Ball Shooting.

Possibly no community was ever so deeply disturbed by any event as the nearby county of New Kent over the Barham-Ball shooting.

On the afternoon of Friday, April 18, 1890, Max Cuthbert, Richmond representative of the New York Herald, came to my office with a note from the local editor of the Dispatch, asking me to go to New Kent for that paper the following day. The object of the trip was to ascertain and write up the facts of this shooting. The Ball and Barham families

stood high. Barham had been a commissioner in chancery for years, and Ball had been repeatedly elected commissioner of the revenue, first by Democrats, then by Republicans. So stirred up over the event were the citizens of the community that they had divided into two cliques, neither of which would furnish a word for publication. Into this hornets' nest my journey had to be made. My uneasiness received a decided impetus when John Stamper, of the Dispatch business office, a native of that section, warned me that all parties concerned were extremely touchy, particularly old man Barham, who was an unmitigated fire-eater.

The facts of the case were about as follows. Lula Ball, a rather comely brunette, held a great affection for Tom Barham, a handsome young man of blonde type. She told her father and brothers that Barham had taken advantage of her innocence. At this the men took Barham at the point of a pistol, placed him on a railroad train under dose guard, and carried him to Washington, where the couple 53 married. Returning home, Barham positively refused to live with his bride, hence the shooting.

Early Saturday morning found me on the train. Bad luck seemed in my favor. Instead of having transportation to Providence Forge, the nearest station to the shooting, by error my pass read to Clifton Forge, several hundred miles in an opposite direction. My experience with Providence Forge had been entirely with the picnic grounds, which are on the north side of the railroad. The train passed that point at a speed of at least thirty miles an hour. I saw no sign of a station, and the following day being my baby's first birthday, I just had to be home. I went to the last car of the train and jumped. By the time I had finished digging gravel with my hands and wrists, the train came to a standstill, the station being on the opposite side of the track.

My turnout awaited, and we were soon at the Barham house. The father of the boy met us at the door, but refused us admission until his counsel, Lawyer Lacy, could be seen. He thought Lacy had gone to Richmond. Disappointment settled over me, but remembering my old motto, paraphrasing that of whist players, “When in doubt, eat,” I had recourse to

the alleged hotel to partake of dinner, such as it was. While thus engaged I glanced up and caught sight of a gentleman who seemed a perfect double of Judge B. W. Lacy, then president of the State Supreme Court. Inquiry if he were not Barham's counsel brought forth answer in the affirmative, and he expressed his entire willingness, in fact he desired, that his client should talk for publication. We went to the house where Barham lay badly wounded. He appeared to be in a fairly cheerful mood, and unhesitatingly proceeded to give an account of the shooting. He said he and his brother were on their way to Plum Point, just across from West Point, when 54 they heard a horse galloping behind them, and turned in time to see Ball ride up. The horseman began at once to fire with a navy revolver at the younger man. The brothers got out of their jumper; the belligerents had been moving around in a circle. Continued Barham, “I never could shoot good in gloves, so I removed them as quickly as I could, and then I let him have it.” Ball died almost instantly.

Leaving Barham's house, we met my old friend, O'Dell, a member of the State Democratic Committee. Learning my mission, he advised me to go by his store, where young Ball, a son of the slain man and brother of the gift in question, worked. The sister had been strictly enjoined to speak to no one without her brother's permission. He wrote a note which he sealed and gave me to hand her. Feeling that the situation justified it, the epistle was opened and read as soon as the turn of the road been been reached. It simply stated it would be handed her by a Dispatch representative, who seemed to be a very nice young man (knowing youngster, that), and to whom she might talk freely. Lula Ball impressed me as a girl of some intelligence and a good talker. When quite young her father had told her of a similar case in the adjoining county of Charles City, where two young men had avenged their sister by lying in ambush and killing the guilty man. Speaking of her father's killing, she said it nearly broke her heart when she saw he had been shot in his poor deformed (club) hand. Although the shooting had taken place on a lonely country road, there were numerous witnesses, every one of whom we saw and heard their account. One old colored man, who had been ditch digging, proved to be remarkably amusing. He said

he saw the men shooting at each other, but thought they were just “projickin'.” We drove thirty-four miles that day over some of the worst roads in the State 55 and arrived at the station in time to make the Richmond train, violating the speed laws on the last lap, much to the dread of my negro companion who repeatedly expressed the profound conviction that his boss would horsewhip him on his arrival home.

And now comes the strange part of the story. At a subsequent trial for divorce, a doctor testified that Barham or no other man had ever wronged Lula Ball. She simply had an obsessive love for Barham and determined to marry him at any cost.

56

I Write a Warrant.

In the Philip Norman Nicholas case there was achieved by me that which is the ambition of every newspaper man—a clean “scoop.” My avocation at that time lay outside the field of journalism, but with the instinct of the true news writer, no good “story” could escape me.

About dusk on the evening of Saturday, December 10, 1892, in accordance with our usual custom, Major John Poe, Chief of Police, and myself were engaged in an interesting bout of that most enticing of games—backgammon. Sergeant Alex. M. Tomlinson came in, and in violation of their usual custom they began to talk police matters before me. Said the latter, “Major, I am afraid we cannot get that man to-night. We have no way of going up there.”

“Up where?” I queried.

Tomlinson then went on to tell me that a man in Henrico County, just this side the “Gooseland” line, had bored a hole in a boat and drowned two men. An offer came from me at once to furnish the desired transportation. Tomlinson accepted forthwith. “You mast have a four-seated vehicle, because (Sergeant of Detectives) John Hall has got to go along, and there will probably be some one to bring back.” This proved agreeable to me.

“And don't forget,” came the parting shot, “to bring plenty of cigars. And be at the corner of Seventh and Broad at 7 o'clock.”

The hour designated found the vehicle, the cigars and myself at the appointed place. Prior to this I had made a flying visit to the Dispatch office, and arranged with the local editor, Solon B. Woodfin, for the story, such as having 57 the paper held open and the like, not forgetting to mention the matter of remuneration for myself.

We drove up the Westham Road to Lenox's store, and thence by the River Road to the home of 'Squire Rugg, the magistrate of the district where the crime had been committed. The story could not be briefly narrated, and in substance it ran thusly: Philip Norman Nicholas worked a farm at the point before mentioned, near the junction of Henrico and Goochland Counties, just across the James River from Powhatan. Beside him there resided on it a man named Mills and his wife, and Judson Wilkinson, and his widowed mother. Nicholas and Wilkinson were candidates for the favor of Mrs. Mills, her better half running a poor third. Several days before the time mentioned above, Nicholas had told Mills and Wilkinson that he had seen a “bee tree” in Powhatan, and that he would take them over in the boat and they could get a lot of honey. They accepted the invitation, and the trio sallied forth. Arriving on the far side of the river, Nicholas gave them vague directions as to the location of the tree, and the supposition is that after consuming considerable time in the fruitless search, they returned to the boat. In the meantime Nicholas had been busy with that craft and had with an auger bored several holes in it. And right here the hand of Providence interposed, as it invariably does. It so happened that a few of the shavings made in puncturing the bottom lodged against a little wing dam on the Powhatan side. This excited suspicion; the boat, upon being located and raised, disclosed several newly cut holes in its bottom. Before this Nicholas had told the story of their going after the honey, but claimed that the sinking occurred by reason of some undisclosed leak. The fact that he could swim but little, and that in making his way to land

with clothes, 58 boots and overcoat, he nearly lost his life, gave the color of truth to his statement.

When the magistrate had finished his tale it was about 1 A. M. Sergeant Tomlinson advanced the opinion that, as soon as the true state of affairs become known, Nicholas would probably be lynched and, to avoid such a contingency, thought it best that he be taken into custody and brought to Richmond for safekeeping. The 'Squire acquiesced in this view, and the party made its way to his store, where he kept pen, ink and warrants. With the slowness of little practice, the magistrate began to draw the momentous document. My one dread was that I would not be able to get back to town before the paper had gone to press. An idea struck me. "'Squire, I have a fountain pen which is more rapid than your way. Why not let me write the warrant? I can do it more quickly." With the insight of a good official he recognized the cogency of my remarks and acquiesced therein. The law of Virginia is that a warrant must follow the language of the statute which has been violated. Possibly there may be some law in Virginia which provides that a man must not decoy others into a boat and while they are searching for something that does not exist bore holes in the said boat, drowning the other men, etc., but if such existed it had never come within my purview. The paper being written and signed, we started for the domicile of the lately bereaved widow. Hall went in the front door, Tomlinson to the back, and after assuring themselves that I had a deadly concealed "weepon" on my person, assigned me the duty of responding to any signal in the shape of a whistle that might be sounded. In a few moments Hall came to the door and beckoned me in. Mrs. Mills and her brood of several children were in the bed. Nicholas sat on a pallet on the floor, pulling on his boots.

Back to Richmond started the party, it being well past 59 2 o'clock. Nicholas sat in the back seat with me, a case of honor thrust, not achieved. With the example of Brer Rabbit in mind, I "kept on saying nothing." Nicholas proved more voluble, and one of his remarks had a decided bearing on his case. "I did not," said he, "see the corn cob stopper in the hole in the boat until we were coming back." Before this no one knew how the openings were plugged. This remark remained unrelated by me for fear of being drawn into the

case as a witness. When we came to the corner of Sixth and Main the officers with their man got out to go to the Second Station at Sixth and Marshall. Continuing to the Dispatch office, where owing to my being stiff with cold after the long drive, about thirty miles in all, Private Watchman Smithers lifted me out and carried me to the composing room. It was now 4 o'clock and the compositors and foreman were awaiting me. With more speed than style the story was hurried to its conclusion, the foreman standing over me and taking each sheet of copy away as fast as it could be written.

Monday morning a letter of thanks from the Dispatch Company reached me. It also contained a nice check.

In due course the case came to trial in Henrico County Court. Thanks to my foresight, I did not have to testify. To my surprise the warrant hastily drawn by me was not quashed, and in due course the jury rendered a verdict of murder in the first degree. The evidence showed that Nicholas attempted to purchase poison before taking the water route. Appeal to the Supreme Court availed naught, and the hanging followed in due course. Nicholas was a degenerate. An ancestor of his by the exact name had been Attorney General of Virginia and a prominent citizen of Richmond a hundred years before.

While passing through the Capitol Square several years later, Sergeant Tomlinson hailed me. “My wife told me 60 to ask you the first time I saw you if it did not make you feel bad to think a man was hung upon a warrant which you wrote.”

“Sergeant, tell Mrs. Tomlinson for me that I feel so badly that it had nearly been forgotten. When I see how hard it frequently is for two men to come together on some trifling subject, I have no qualms where twelve men agree on a matter of life and death. The verdict is theirs, not mine.”

61

Who Told It?

A very distressing case came to trial in the Hustings Court in May, 1891. A clerk in the City Treasurer's office had been systematically and continuously robbing the municipality. His chief had attempted to shield him, learning which, J. Taylor Ellyson, the then Mayor, visited each department in turn, making the characteristic remark, “If any one knows anything I do not know, I want them to tell me and tell me quick.” A touch of unusual sadness was added to the affair by reason of the arrest being made on the fifth anniversary of the culprit's marriage. No doubt existed as to his guilt, the evidence being in the best legal shape—written.

Evan R. Chesterman, son of our editor, and myself represented the Dispatch at the trial. On the second day Captain A. B. Guigon, of counsel for the defence, asked me to step with him and —'s brother into the City Engineer's office, in order that they might talk with me. At my suggestion we went to the Chancery Court room, that always being vacant in the afternoon. Upon our arrival there this conversation occurred:

“The family of Mr. —,” said Captain Guigon, “are very much displeased with the report of the trial in today's Dispatch.”

“In what respect, Captain?” was my query.

“They object to the way in which you referred to the action of Mrs. — in looking around the court room in a careless manner while the clerk charged the jury. I do not know whether you wrote that particular paragraph or not, 62 but I presume, as senior representative, you are responsible.”

“Absolutely, Captain,” came my reply. As a matter of fact, Chesterman had written that portion of the report. “I assume all responsibility for the publication. It is positively true; it struck me as being particularly queer that Mrs. — should have seemed indifferent to what to me always appears to be the most solemn part of a trial.”

“All right,” he rejoined, “we will see about it later.”

“Suit yourself as to that,” I replied as we left the room.

Believing discretion the better part of valor, on my way back to the office I stopped by home and slipped a gun into my pocket.

Upon my arrival at the Dispatch building, Colonel Chesterman sent me word to come at once to his room. The Colonel, the most moderate of men, never blustered, and believed in force only as a last resort.

“I am afraid,” said he, “they are going to make trouble for you over this case. Are you prepared for it?” Such a warning from that source could not be lightly regarded. Assuring him that the roll-call would find me present the matter dropped. It puzzled me how my chief come into possession of the information. My mouth had been sealed, having mentioned it to no one.

Twenty-five years or more afterwards, Guigon and myself met one day in the City Clerk's office. “Captain, something has been worrying me for years. How did Colonel Chesterman know about our conversation that day during the — trial?” At first his memory of the event was not clear, but he had not told.

“Did you not know that Mrs. — was deaf?”

“Certainly not. Had I been aware of it you could have had any kind of an apology you desired.”

But the question remains, who told Colonel Chesterman?

63

The Graham Courts.

The Graham court of inquiry and court-martial stand forth particularly prominent by reason of being the only naval trial ever held in Richmond, or, for that matter, any other inland city in this country, with the exception of Washington, D. C.

Graham commanded the fleet of monitors which, for some years, anchored on the south side of James River, about five miles below the city.

One Saturday morning, in the late spring or early summer of 1892, William Ryan, editor of the State, ordered me to go down to the monitors and report the proceedings of a court of inquiry. There were few or no automobiles in Richmond at that day, and a good old reliable horse and buggy furnished the means of transportation. Driving down the River Road, on the Chesterfield side of the “Noble Jeems,” the war vessels were soon at hand. A hail in true nautical style brought a small boat, and in a few minutes I became an interested spectator. It so happened that my arrival proved almost coincidental with the reading of the charges under investigation. The allegation which formed the basis of the inquiry set forth that, upon receiving the order to observe the proper mourning upon the occasion of the death of Admiral David Porter, whom Graham thought had treated him unfairly, the Commander proceeded to express himself thusly: “So he is dead and gone to hell, is he, where he ought to have been twenty years ago. I wish I was a first-class fireman in hell; I'd roast him, I'd make it hot for him, God damn him.” This remark, made in the presence of the ship's yeoman, found its way 64 to headquarters. My friend, dear old Dr. G. Watson James, scholar, gentleman and loyal Confederate, always said that the only thing wrong about Graham's pronouncement lay in the fact that it should have gone back ten years prior to the time the commander specified. The explanation of this is that Porter commanded the first gunboats to get through the obstructions in the river below Richmond, and one of the skiffs from his fleet brought President Lincoln to Richmond upon the occasion of his visit shortly after the evacuation.

No other newspaper man attended the court of inquiry that day, and no inkling of the proceedings had as yet found its way into any local daily. The State being an afternoon

publication, necessitated my leaving early, and in due season a boat put me ashore. My team was intact and soon had me back in Richmond. A first-class “scoop” that afternoon followed.

But every rose has its thorn. Upon my return after dinner to procure a paper and enjoy my success to its full, Ryan called me into his office and said Commander Graham had been looking for the man who had written the report of his trial. My mind had already arrived at the conclusion that Graham was mentally unbalanced. Wishing to have no difficulty with one in his state, my discretion overcame my valor, and the remainder of that afternoon saw me up in the third story of the Presbyterian Building, just opposite the State office. Of course, the Commander never came. Some time after this some one explained to me that Ryan had done this as a joke. Some people have such a peculiar sense of humor.

Monday saw every paper in town fully represented at the court. Upon that occasion we left Rocketts in a launch for the monitors. Commander Graham said nothing, but if looks meant anything there were daggers enough to have 65 equipped an entire army of italians. Having no private means of conveyance that day, at the noon recess Commander Graham was approached with the very modest request that he furnish me transportation to Richmond, in order to make the paper all right. The reply proved not an answer, but an explosion. His “No, sir!” sounded like a battery of rapid-firers all going off “simultaneously together.” Our report that day proved exceedingly meagre, but it mattered not; we had the cream of it the Saturday before.

The court lasted some days. There were more gold anchors and braid in evidence than we had ever seen before. There were some queer geniuses and peculiar characters among the membership, and ere long the newspaper contingent had a comic-opera name for each. Lieutenant (now General) Charles Lauchheimer acted as judge advocate of inquiry and court-martial, being assisted at the latter by Lieutenant Lemley. This last sat in the United States Court room in the Federal Building. Upon the occasion of its convening, a commodore's salute, in honor of some members of the court of that rank, was fired by

local artillery in the Capitol Square. The statement made at the time claimed that never before had a similar compliment been paid in an inland city. The court-martial lasted a long time. The evidence, to a large extent, proved trivial, such matters as the ship's carpenter building a doll house for the Commander's little girl, who died before the trial, figuring in it. The general opinion of the followers of the trial coincided with that formed by me the first time the Commander spoke to me. Grief had unbalanced his mind. The verdict of the court practically dismissed him from the navy.

66

A Terrible Warning.

No satisfactory explanation has ever been made as to why Robert E. Blankenship had such a dislike to newspaper publicity. President of the Old Dominion Iron and Nail Works, he invariably resented the appearance in print of his name or that of the company which he headed. Standing orders, therefore, were in every office in town that, under no circumstances, should a writer violate this wish. If such were done, a demand for the dismissal of the offender followed promptly, in a manner that left no doubt as to its sincerity. Strange to say, the business offices generally sided with Blankenship, possibly for the reason that, from time immemorial, the two branches of all well-conducted journals have been at loggerheads. In fact, the local end of the papers never attempted to conceal the contempt it had for the counting-room, except on payday.

Had Blankenship been some person of no importance, this trait of his would have given little or no concern. But such did not happen to be the case. He stood forth as a citizen and business man of prominence and integrity. Not only had he made a great success of one of Richmond's most important industries, but from time to time he had held various positions of honor in the community, notably that of president of the Chamber of Commerce.

As early as 1886, which year marked my advent into journalism, this state of affairs had existed. One of the stories related me upon that occasion ran as follows:

Before the cities of Manchester and Richmond were connected by street cars the three dailies of the capital pooled 67 their interests so far as concerned the Southside, and one man did the local for all. This consisted of riding over on the stage running between the two metropolises, missing a trip, and returning by the same conveyance. For this work, not over two hours a day, the remuneration consisted of $15 per week, a sum not to be sneezed at for the labor involved. As the nestor of the Richmond press, this assignment lay in the hands of Henry K. Ellyson, of the Dispatch. The job for a long time fell to the lot of George Canning Wilde. Though a splendid reporter, George gave his employers no end of trouble, first and last. Not the least breach which he committed consisted in ignoring the taboo of Blankenship and the Old Dominion Iron and Nail Works. All went well until some unimportant item involving the two appeared. A severe reprimand resulted. Again George transgressed in a similar particular and Ellyson warned him pointedly, that if the name of Blankenship or the Old Dominion Works were mentioned, a vacancy would exist in that particular job. Time went on apace, and one day when Wilde visited the Southside the streets were crowded to an extent never before known to even the oldest inhabitant. Circus in town? No. Riot? No. What on earth is the matter? Old Dominion Iron and Nail Works shut down on account of low water. Here indeed existed a dilemma. On one hand the biggest Manchester news item of years; 600 men out of work. On the other the standing order not to call certain names. Aha, a happy solution came to mind, and here is what the Richmond papers carried the next day:

“We are reliably informed that a certain manufacturing establishment, located in the middle of James River, about a mile above Mayo's Bridge, the president of which was raised in the huckleberry swamps of Chesterfield, has been 68 compelled to suspend operations in consequence of the low water.”

George received his walking papers forthwith. Nothing less would have been satisfactory. My own experience with Blankenship amounted to nothing. If he did not wish me to write his name; it would not be written, and there the matter ended.

March 13, 1888, while crossing the railroad tracks in the Southern yards, near Fourteenth Street, Blankenship met his death, being struck by a train. A man of portly build, strange to say, not a mark appeared on his body, a heavy overcoat which he wore evidently protected him. It seemed queer to me to write anything connected with him without first consulting him. A few weeks later it fell to my lot to handle his will, when probated in the Chancery Court. Considering the manner of his death, this instrument read almost prophetically. It follows:

“Richmond, Va., 27 Feb., 1877.

“Should any misfortune at any time befall me I wish my wife placed in entire charge of my estate, and retain it during her natural life without security or other legal forms.

“I am in the full possession of my health and mind at this writing and believe I am at peace with all men.

“R. E. BLANKENSHIP.

“Witnesses:

“G. W. Catlett,

“Arth. B. Clarke.”

It was in his own handwriting on a small sheet of note paper, such as ladies use for correspondence. Misfortune followed in the second generation. In January, 1904, Blankenship's son, a splendid and most promising young fellow, who bid fair to equal his

father as a business man, fell into the forebay at the works. The stopping of the water-wheel 69 gave the first intimation that a terrible accident had occurred.

For fear some of my readers may err, and infer that there is vindictiveness in this, it should be clearly understood that there is not the slightest ill will in or between these lines. There is no desire on my part to help the Almighty administer the universe. Up to the present time He has made a splendid job of it. But, nevertheless, it is a fact that the only consistent opponent of standing the newspaper men of Richmond ever had met with the most terrible misfortune.

Since writing the foregoing, a business associate of Blankenship's has given a partial reason for his deep-rooted dislike of newspaper men. It is not only justifiable, but commendable. Belle Isle, where the Old Dominion Iron and Nail Works is located, has always been a part of Richmond. When writing of it the reporters invariably mentioned it in the Manchester news. Hence his disgruntlement.

70

Me and the President.

A most pleasant experience of my newspaper life consisted of a ride from Milford to Richmond, forty miles, the only occupants of a special car most of the way being President Benjamin Harrison and myself. His Excellency and the citizens of Richmond were on the outs, but my paper, the State, had always been fairly friendly to him, hence his complaisance. The bad feeling between the President and the people of this city arose from some humorous paragraphs in the papers which alleged that the chief executive while hunting had killed a razor-back hog belonging to a farmer on James River, believing it to be a wild boar. So seriously did the President take this to heart that when a committee of representative Richmonders went down to the wharf to pay their respects, he refused to see them and remained in his cabin. He then won the last round of the contest by remarking that Virginians were like potatoes—the best of them being underground.

Upon the occasion of the ride in question, the President seemed in rare good humor. He expressed great amusement over the fact that some wag in Washington had gotten out a nice little blank book, on the outside of which had been stamped, “What Congress Has Done.” The explanation is that Harrison being Republican and Congress Democratic they sympathized very little with one another. He assured me solemnly that, after being in session several months, there had been only one bill passed—to build a bridge over some river in California. Many a twelve hundred dollar clerk has put on more “front” than the President did in talking with me. There was no lack of dignity 71 and his plainness compared favorably with that of the old shoe mentioned in song and story. Mrs. Harrison entering the car while we were conversing, her presentation to me could have been no more impressive had it been to a United States Senator. The same thing occurred when his private secretary, “Lige” Halford, came in. Seeing a little boy playing in the back part of the car, the President replied in answer to my query that he was “Baby” McKee, the prominent White House figure of that day. When properly treated President Harrison was as courtly and gentlemanly as any one it has been my good fortune to meet.

72

Why Hadley Escaped.

The last crime with which I came in contact was the Hadley case. Though my retirement from the newspaper field had taken place more than twenty-five years before, this murder awoke in me all the newspaper instinct of former years. On Sunday morning, January 19th, of last year (1919), my wife called me into my parlor, where a young lady of the neighborhood sat visiting. The latter proceeded to tell me that the day before, she and another neighbor had identified the body of a woman which had been found in the river beyond the western limits of the city some weeks prior, as that of Mrs. Hadley, who with her husband, a medical lieutenant, stationed at the Westhampton Hospital, had roomed for some time at her house. The young lady preceded her story with the proviso, to which I neither assented or dissented, that her narrative should not go outside the four walls of

the room in which we were. While not recognizing her right to impose any such conditions, the fact that the conversation occurred in my own house tied my hands. That night I went to the young lady's house and in her mother's presence asked her to relieve me from an implied promise. She refused to do this, and a brother present inquired if this were being done for reputation or money. All present seemed to be greatly horrified at my answer, “Both.” In this connection, it might be pertinent to remark that these same people afterwards sold pictures of the murdered lady to a local paper, the editor of which expressed his disgust, remarking that, to his knowledge, it was the first time a portrait 73 given a person by a friend had been parted with for money for publication.

Nothing appeared in the papers until Thursday afternoon. To show my neighbors that my hands were clean, the paper which made the publication loaned me its data. Strange as it may seem, the first inkling of the identification had been given by the Commonwealth's Attorney of Henrico. He remarked in a Main Street cigar store that the river mystery had been solved and that the culprit was an officer stationed at Westhampton. The editor at once put a reporter on a car to that place, where the county officers and several city policemen were in consultation. They were dumbfounded at the appearance of the newspaper man. Major Galbraith, the commandant of the hospital, made no bones in stating that Lieutenant Hadley, who had disappeared meanwhile, having secured his discharge, had undoubtedly murdered his wife. The law officers begged so hard that the news be suppressed for the time being that it was withheld until Thursday.

My plea to the family to release me from my implied promise was based on the fact that, having done my first newspaper work on the greatest of cases, Cluverius, I wanted to end with what bid fair to become the sensation of the year.

As luck would have it, it came to my lot to furnish the ending to this story. My son, in Houston at the time, sent me an account of how the Henrico authoritities had bungled. Hadley's parents resided in a small town in Texas. Instead of wiring the sheriff of the county, the Henrico officers addressed a telegram to the chief of police. There being no

such official in the village, the wire remained unopened for several days, during which the county officers made no attempt to follow up. Finally some energetic deputy opened the telegram and, after losing valuable time in an effort to 74 locate the sheriff, arrived at the house within a few minutes of the time Hadley had left.

Mrs. Hadley was an attractive and intelligent little woman. She had roomed at two houses in my neighborhood. Her husband neglected her, but she was too proud and too loyal to complain. Her loneliness dominated her until it became truly pitiful. She visited at my house more than once, and ate supper with us on a Sunday night. She was a brilliant conversationalist, a finished musician, and a wife of whom no man need be ashamed.

As a friend it would have given me pleasure to help run down her murderer. Never to my memory have the ends of justice been defeated by reason of the officers taking the newspaper men into their confidence. This is not surprising when it is remembered that, as a rule, the latter are men of greater intelligence than the former. I recollect reading some years ago an article by an authority on criminology in which he remarked that if the same class of intelligence were employed in running down criminals as in defending them there would be no such thing as an undetected crime.

75

An Artificial Earthquake.

When the Times began publication in 1886 it occupied the building 916 East Main Street, the business office being on the second floor and the composing room on the third, which ran back only a small portion of the depth of the structure. The press work was done in a printing office on Twelfth Street. Part of my job consisted in waiting at the office and seeing that the paper went to press at 4 o'clock and to cover any matter of importance occurring up to that time. Work generally ended by 1 or 2 A. M., and with the example of Omar before me, a blanket, a folding bed and an alarm clock, helped me to fill in the interval nicely. One morning, when all local work had ended and the gentle goddess had

been successfully wooed, my slumbers were disturbed by the swaying of the building. Before many minutes had elapsed there was an accurate and graphic description of the “seismic disburtance” in the composing room. Strange to say, the item did not show up and the matter passed from my mind. Several years ago a nice little story appeared in the printers' paper, written by a man in Syracuse, N. Y., a compositor on the Times in early days. He told how all the printers, after they had finished work, formed in a row on their tiptoes and by swinging backward and forwards in unison gave a very good imitation of an earthquake.

76

Some Tight Pinches.

Just exactly how much a man should concede for the sake of peace and harmony is a very pretty question. There are times when the least concession would lead to ignominious defeat and disaster, while, on the other hand, keeping a stiff upper lip will save trouble all around. Different diseases demand various remedies, more or less desperate as the case may be. To weaken in the face of danger is to invite catastrophe, while “bluffing” will frequently carry a person to safety, to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

In my time some rather tense situations have been weathered by virtue of a bold front. One instance, in particular, left a very vivid impression. Sitting in the Whig office one noon time, the door opened, and “Jim” Holleran entered. This man on that day looked to me a giant. He seemed to be every bit of six feet eleven or eleven feet six, it being difficult to determine. There existed no doubt in my mind but what my time had come at last. One sign of weakness and Holleran could easily have demolished me with a single blow. To all intents and purposes there was no knowledge whatever on my part of his being in the room. Continuing my writing for a few minutes I at length glanced up, and raking my foot sidewise across the floor, a noisy trick of my school days, demanded, “Well, what do you want?”

Holleran hesitated for a second and then reaching for his hat, removed it. That was a signal that danger had passed and the advantage lay on my side. “You did me an injustice in the paper this morning,” he began.

“In what respect?”

77

“You said that the building burnt on Seventeenth Street last night had been used for chicken fights. That is a mistake; I used it as a kitchen.”

“It is not a mistake, Mr. Holleran, I was there to a chicken fight myself the day ‘Buck’ Royall was married. You will remember there was a very heavy snowstorm that day. I paid my dollar and asked no favors. I fail to see that there is anything to correct.”

That afternoon Thomas Potts, the president of the Whig Company, sent for me. “Mr. Holleran was in to see me today. He said he was treated unfairly in today's paper, and that you were sore because you had to pay to come in the chicken fight that day.”

“Now, Mr. Potts, that is really all nonsense. As president of a newspaper you should certainly know that any money spent in collecting news does not come out the pocket of the reporter. So far as I am concerned, I had rather pay twenty dollars than one to see a chicken fight, for it looks more sporty and does not cost me a cent personally either way. Now this newspaper is your property, not mine. Every time anything true is denied it makes it worth just so much less.”

“Well, Mr. Holleran is a customer of mine. If you can let him down easy it will be a personal favor to me.”

“Tell Mr. Holleran to come to see me at 1 o'clock tomorrow.”

He did so. Apparently he had lost several feet since the day before. The first query fired at him brought the answer that only three chicken fights had been held there. Shooting at random, dog fights were mentioned.

“Only one,” he replied. “There would have been another last night if the building had not burned.”

“All right, Mr. Holleran; I think we can get together on this.”

78

My pencil worked rapidly for several minutes. He listened attentively while the result was read to him. Here it is: “It is stated at the request of Mr. Holleran that, with the exception of three chicken fights, one dog fight, and one that was to have been held last night, the building belonging to him, on North Seventeenth Street, burnt several nights ago, had never been used for any other purpose than a kitchen.” Holleran, perfectly satisfied, picked up his hat, thanked me kindly and left the office.

Another similar event ended equally as luckily. One afternoon, Sam Gilliland, our Manchester man, brought in among other things, an account of the falling of an elevator in a cotton mill on the Southside, in which several boys had been injured. In a little while there came a phone message. The Dispatch had promised not to mention the accident, would not the Whig be equally as accommodating? Most assuredly was the reply.

In going to tea that evening Colonel W. D. Chesterman, local editor of the Dispatch, and myself walked up the street together. My version of the matter brought the statement from him that he had promised nothing of the kind. “What I told him was that I would see about it.” Accordingly the item appeared in both papers. The rest of the story will be related in the language of loyal Peter Burton the next day. Making my appearance about 1 o'clock, my usual time, he welcomed me with the remark, “I came near having to lick a man on your account just now.”

“How come?”

“There was a man in here by the name of Arrington, who said you had done him a dirty trick. I drew back my old blackthorn and told him, ‘My friend, I don't know and don't care who you are, but if you or any other man says Mr. Ezekiel served you a dirty trick you are damned liar.’”

My blood in those days flowed warm and I would not 79 leave well enough alone. A note indited to the gentleman in question contained the statement that if he or any other man said he had been served a dirty trick by me that he lied and that he knew he lied when he said it. The communication concluded with the pacifying statement that he could find me at my office any evening at 6 o'clock. Instead of coming at that hour and catching me alone and whaling me properly, a real nice letter of explanation came.

Undoubtedly my closest escape from corporeal chastisement occurred at the old Dispatch office. Solon Woodfin, the local editor and myself were in our room one day about noon when two real huskies, either of whom could have thrown me over his head easily with one hand, came in. Going up to Woodfin, they made some remarks about the police court, at which he waved then in my direction, that being my bailiwick. Walking up to me one of them inquired, “How much will it cost to have our names left out of the paper tomorrow morning?”

“One hundred thousand dollars,” I replied.

At this he bridled up. “I am not fooling; I am talking sense.”

“No, you are not; you may not have intended it so, but your remark (fighting the devil with fire) was damned insulting.”

Dealing with him in his own coin seemed to set him thinking, He took a different tack. “What would you do if I was to call you—”(using an epithet barred in good society).

Looking him squarely in the eye, my reply came quickly.

“I would break your neck; if you don't believe it try it.”

For a second or more, we watched one another, the muscles of his hands twitched, and then he quieted down. He tried to smooth matters over. “It was just a little street fight.”

80

“Nothing of the kind; it was a regular race riot. You white men and negroes were firing pistols at each other. I heard the evidence in court this morning. Good day.” And two subdued men left the room.

While working on the Whig, in 1887, it fell to my lot to assist in breaking up a policy game under the alluring title of “The Southern Confederate Veteran Distribution Company.” Confederate veteran had a power in its name alone. But as a matter of truth the title did not tell the purposes of the scheme, the same being a policy game, pure and simple, with all its attendant evils. Confederate veterans had nothing to do with it. Some one stood to make a lot of easy money, when we nipped the project in the bud. Above all questions of morality, our paper had no idea of letting the terms Confederate veteran be prostituted for the purpose of gain. Following the fall of the lottery a loving message had been sent me that they would “get me” by Saturday night. What Saturday night they meant did not appear, but more than 1,700 Saturday nights (and this is one of them) have come and gone since then, but they have not got me yet so as you could notice it.

81

They Stole Watermelons.

One dull day in the summer of 1892 it came to my mind that maybe people were not as honest as they thought they were. Being questioned, the mayor, chief of police, judge of the Hustings Court, police justice and numerous officials, State, city and Federal, unanimously admitted that they had stolen watermelons when boys. The best story told

me came from Wallace Washington, clerk to the chief of police. He pleaded guilty to the soft impeachment (or melancholy fact) that one dark night he and several friends had invaded a patch and taken one of its choicest specimens, weighing at least thirty pounds. Up bill and down dale they carried it. When several miles had been traveled, they figured they were at last in the safety zone. They sat down to feast and as they did so the moon, hidden until that time, suddenly burst from behind a cloud, and they discovered that they had made a long-distance haul of a beautiful and most luscious “punkin.”

Of all this truthful concourse, Judge Richardson, of the Hustings Court, then police justice, and the then Postmaster Russell are the only two left. This latter said he had on one occasion, while out hunting, taken a melon without permission, but that in thinking it over he saw he had no right to do so, and that though importuned to repeat the offense under like circumstances, he had invariably refused. Former Judge Adkins read this statement, and the next day brought over a touching little couplet, which after it had been put into type, he asked that it be not printed, as he and Russell, belonging to different wings of the Republican party, his pleasantry might be misunderstood. Judge 82 Adkins has gone to his final reward. He was a good man and a splendid judge whose decisions were rarely reversed by the Supreme Court of Virginia, and it is certain the greatest Judge of all was no less kind to him. After this long time the ex-postmaster will enjoy the humor.

“Let me kiss him for his mother, Let me kiss his gentle brow; For he ate a stolen melon, And he's sorry for it now.

“Though oft tempted while out hunting By his fellow sporting men, He let the melons be And refused to eat again.”

83

“Never Mind About God.”

It so happened that I rode on the funeral train which bore the body of President Davis from New Orleans to Richmond in May, 1893. On the evening before we left the Crescent

City, a party stood in the rotunda of the old St. Charles Hotel. In the number were General Stephen D. Lee, D. C. Richardson, J. Taylor Ellyson and others. General Lee told of his meeting with the boy (Parker's) battery. “I was afraid of that crowd,” he said. “Major Parker had been treating them like a lot of Sunday school scholars. Just before the battle (Second Mansassas) I had them drawn up in line, and I spoke to them: ‘Boys, you are going today where men go. If any one is wounded, even if it is your own brother, don't stop; there will be some one to look after him.’ They started off across the brow of the bill when at the very beginning one fine young fellow got it in the leg.”

“That was me,” interpolated Richardson, just to show how small the world is.

All present smiled, and the General continued: “About this time one of the boys came running up to Major Parker. ‘Major, Major,’ he exclaimed, ‘God has blessed us with a victory.’ ‘Never you mind about God, sir, you get back to your gun.’ And then I knew that battery was all right. But I always loved those boys, for they helped me to put the wreath around my stars” (referring to his promotion from brigadier to major-general).

In a book on the boy battery the writer tells of this fight. How as the battalion went into action, “Davy” Richardson yelled out, “Go it, Parker, she's jumped over hell 84 and gone.” Then he was shot. He explained this to me, after reference to it as being disrespectful to his commandant. The story is interesting as showing how the mind works at time of great excitement. He had no reference whatever to the major. As the battery went into action there flashed through Richardson's mind an incident that had occurred in the county of Southampton many years before. An old man had a slave, who, under the pretext of suffering terribly from rheumatism, absolutely refused to do the least work of any kind. Having doubts as to the genuineness of her indisposition, he decided to put her to the test. One morning he had the son, Parker, to hitch up the horse to the cart. He told Aunt 'Liza to get in, that she was so no 'count they were going to take her down to hell and dump her in. Aunt 'Liza smiled, thinking it a joke, but did as told. They drove off to a field a short distance away, and there sure enough were the flames coming out of a hole in the ground.

Aunt 'Liza's smile began to lessen. They drove up to the fire. The son started to pull out the lynch-pin. Flesh and blood could stand no more. The old woman gave one mighty jump, landing well on the far side of the flames, after which she fairly flew, the boy in full pursuit. At this juncture the old man gave mouth to the cry, “Go it, Parker, she's jumped over hell and gone.”

This journey from New Orleans to Richmond could never be forgotten by any Southern man who participated in it. Leaving on Sunday afternoon, after suitable ceremonies, the train marie its first halt at Davis' old home, Beauvoir, Miss. The old family servants were at the station, the floor being literally hidden by flowers. At Montgomery, Atlanta and Raleigh, the body after being placed on a suitable bier was carried over a short line of march. The most impressive sight to my mind occurred at some 85 crossing in North Carolina. A little boy, seven or eight years of age, with no grown person near, stood at attention, hat in hand, as the train rushed by.

Hours late, we arrived in Richmond just before day. Dawn began as the body of the Southern leader, with suitable escort, drew into Main Street at Fourteenth. The band played the dead march from Saul. The crowd had remained on the street the entire night. A more impressive or weird scene would be hard to conjure.

86

Council Humor.

So prosaic a place as the council chamber would probably be about the last in which one would look for humor. Nevertheless, many incidents of that nature have figured there.

Upon one occasion Alderman Gray submitted his resignation as a member of the board. Josiah Crump, a negro of no mean attainment and an employee of the postoffice, secured the floor. In his most sepulchral voice, Josiah began: “Mr. President, some of us die, some

of us fail of re-election; none was ever known to resign before. I move you, sir, that Mr. Gray be presented with a chromo."

Edinboro Archer, another negro, made a pretty good speech. The subject under discussion being a resolution to raise the salary of the president of the Board of Health from $900 to $1,200 per annum. This occurred at the old Washington Hall, on north side of Broad Street, between Ninth and Tenth. The seats for the members were arranged in the shape of a horse shoe, which was surrounded by a still larger number for the public, arranged in the same form. Thus, it so happened that Dr. Stratton, whose pay was in question, sat in the rear of Archer, who probably had no knowledge of his presence. Edinboro began in this wise: "Gie him twelve hundred a year and a horse and buggy. He get nine hundred now. He don't wuth nine hundred; he don't wuth seven hundred and fifty; he don't wuth five hundred; he don't wuth two hundred and fifty; he don't wuth one hundred; he don't wuth nuthin'." As Archer proceeded with his "argument" Stratton's face became redder and redder. After which Archer flopped down 87 to his seat to the loudest roar of laughter ever heard in that room.

Upon one occasion during the days of reform party ascendancy, two lawyers were arguing a case before the Board of Aldermen. John W. Otley, one of the members from Monroe Ward, for some reason appeared to dislike Wyndham Meredith. The latter gentleman had been speaking for some minutes in his usual very able style, when Otley arose in his place and gravely inquired of the chair, "May I ask of Mr. Meredith which side he represents in this controversy?"

But it remained for Dr. William H. Taylor, the coroner of the city, to perpetrate the very best piece of repartee ever achieved in the chamber. According to the law of that day, every time a dead body was found the coroner would hold a post mortem to decide if it were necessary to have an inquest. These fees, about $25 in a case, together with the rent of morgue and hire of servant ran into a pretty good sum each month. Every time such a bill appeared before the board, Jackson Guy protested. Things assumed such a shape that

eventually Guy offered a motion, which carried, requesting the doctor to appear before the board at its next session. The doctor came as asked, and after telling the body in a nice, easy way that he worked under the State law, and that all the city had to do with the matter was to pay the bills, he turned and faced Guy and, rolling the whites of his eyes in a manner peculiarly his own, closed in this strain: “And, gentlemen, allow me to state in conclusion, should it ever become my duty to set on any member of this body, I will do so cheerfully, free of all cost to the city.”

Some time after this the Legislature changed the law and put the office on a salary basis.

88

A Humane Conductor.

In 1886 I traveled the State of Pennsylvania for a Baltimore firm. Heavy snowfalls in January rendered traffic almost impossible and brought business to a stand-still. If loafing were to be done, I preferred to do it at home, so I caught a train at Reading and started. Reaching Baltimore that night, it being my first trip, there were many matters to be discussed. We did not finish until about ten o'clock, and there was a train due to leave Calvert Station at 10:30. All schedules were upset, and the railroad people said a train might go south at any time. They advised me in the vernacular of the present day, to “stick around.” So well did I follow their instructions that daylight found me still at the station. Just as I started for the dining room they called the Congressional Limited. Managing to catch it, minus breakfast, Washington was reached in due season. The gateman there told me that a train then being made up would leave for Richmond, and by running I might catch it. I made it nicely and the trip proved without incident until we reached Milford, an eating station, forty miles from Richmond. “Twenty minutes for dinner,” called the conductor. A friend of mine, Captain Stratton, had charge of the train. “Captain,” I queried of him, “is it a real twenty minutes, or is it to be a railroad eating-room twenty minutes? I am nearly starved; I have not had a mouthful to eat since I left Reading, twenty-four hours ago.”

“Ezekiel,” he replied in his kindest tone, “this train is not running on schedule. We are going from station to station on telegraphic orders; you go ahead and eat all 89 you want, and when you get through we will start.” He proved as good as his word. Once during my continuous performance he walked my way and looked sympathetically towards the restaurant keeper (the meal was table d'hote), and reassured me quickly, “Take your time, and when you are through we will go.”

I challenge anyone to equal this record of a train being held while he ate dinner.

90

Rumors and Mysteries.

Some of my readers may be astonished, but it is undoubtedly true that in my entire experience never but once did a baseless rumor fall to my lot. There were many reports which varied far from the actual facts, but they were invariably built on some foundation of truth. The only exception to this occurred one day about thirty years ago, when some would-be wag put in circulation, as a joke, the statement that John C. Hagan, at Seventeenth and Venable, had died. Fortunately, Hagan lived for many years to prove, in the language of Mark Twain, that the report of his death had been greatly exaggerated.

And the matter of rumors naturally leads to mysteries. As previously remarked, those capable of judging claim there would be no such thing as an undetected crime if the same class of intellect were used in the discovery of crime as is brought to bear in other sciences. First and last, three “mysteries” engaged my attention, but even those who are unused to drawing deductions will agree with me that very little of the truly mysterious attended any of them.

First on the list is the “Mox Rossdeitcher Case.” Rossdeitcher, a peddler, met his death early one morning, about 1892, in an outhouse on the Feitig place, near Oakwood. Apparently, no cause existed for the killing. Columns without number appeared anent this

case. A dream book cut considerable figure in it, causing me to drive over a good part of Henrico county, only to find out that it had no bearing on it.

No. 2 is that of Mrs. Walker. This lady left the home 91 of her son-in-law, in the east end of the city, early one winter morning. No one ever saw her alive again. Some months after, the lower half of a woman's body floated down the river. This gave rise to the theory that she had been weighted down and that the action of the water working it to and fro had finally caused the corpse to break in two.

The third one interested me to a great extent, first and last, deduction being based on psychology pure and simple, my finding being justified to my own mind and that of Captain Alex Tomlinson, Chief of Detectives. Late one Saturday night, in '93, or possibly '94, a hurry call sent me to the extreme north end of Twenty-ninth street, almost at the corporation line. A colored man had been killed. His wife said the two of them were standing in the yard talking, when a young negro, in a light overcoat, jumped the fence, shot her husband, and left the way he had come. Being first on the ground gave me a good start. All the information desired by me had been procured when the police appeared. When they arrived the statements of all present had been secured.

“Everybody get out of here,” commanded Sergeant Whitlock.

“Me, too,” more forcibly than grammatically.

“Yes, you, too.”

In about three minutes there came a call. “Levy (in former days many of my old acquaintances insisted upon calling me by my mother's maiden name) come in here a minute.”

“Yes, Sergeant, what 'tis?”

“What do you make of this?”

“The woman killed her husband.”

“How do you get that?”

“Well, Sergeant, you know the same as I do that sudden 92 death, or any kind of death for that matter, is not lightly regarded by negroes. They sing, and groan, and chant like a lot of savages. The nearer the relationship, the louder the grief. When I got here tonight this woman was the only one quiet. To my mind she was plumb scared to death.”

The officer laughed at me. Several months afterwards Captain Tomlinson told me a pistol had been found in the well on the premises, and to all intents and purposes he intimated that my theory had been correct.

93

Dr. William H. Taylor.

It is safe to say that no one has done newspaper work in Richmond during the last half century without coming in contact with that prince of students and most likeable man, Dr. William H. Taylor, coroner of the city from the early seventies (having been appointed by Judge A. B. Guigon) until his death, in 1917. As teacher in the Medical College of Virginia and Richmond High School, he had been thrown with thousands of youths—the men and women of today, and no one of them ever speaks of him except in the terms of highest praise and love.

My knowledge of him began very shortly after he had attained unto coronial dignity. His family resided on Twelfth street, just across from my father's home, and it sounded just a little gruesome, even if comical, to hear one of his sisters inquire each night upon his return home, “Well, William Henry, how was business today?” The coroner at that time received pay by the case.

As one of his pupils in the Richmond High School about '76 or '77, we became better acquainted, He treated his scholars here the same as he did the students at the Medical College. He was willing and ready to teach them, but he did not pretend to instruct them in behavior and good manners. That, he took it, came in the line of home training. Use the expression, “Old worthy,” “Swing on to it,” or some similar phrase, in the presence of any of his old pupils today, and a smile will come to the face, and the name of their old preceptor will dwell lovingly upon their lips.

During my school days I saw Dr. Taylor at a disadvantage, 94 probably the only time during his career. One day the gifted elocutionist, Willoughby Reade, gave an entertainment at the school, during the time that would have been spent in one of Dr. Taylor's classes. The Doctor occupied a front seat at the reading in the “assembly room,” and seemed to enjoy the proceedings thoroughly. One of the articles read by the visitor was Mark Twain's account of a drowning at Niagara Falls, where the victim made many rounds of the whirlpool and, seeing a man sitting on the bank nearby, asked his assistance, only to be told that the spectator was the coroner. As Reade proceeded, the laughter of the scholars, who fully appreciated the position, became louder and louder, until it turned into a continuous roar. As a professional, Reade enjoyed applause, but such as this had never come his way before. It did not need a humorous sentence to call forth laughter; it came in a steady stream. When he had finished, the principal of the school, W. F. Fox, walked over to Reade, with the idea of explaining matters. Even this staid gentleman had been convulsed with laughter, and in endeavoring to tell Reade the joke, he himself, possibly the only time on record, joined volubly in the pending merriment. Reade put in a disclaimer, satisfactory to all, saying he had no idea whatever that the coroner of the city had occupied a seat of honor.

During my newspaper days it became my good fortune to know the Doctor more intimately. In his case it could be said truthfully that an acquaintance amounted to a liberal education. Such a store of varied knowledge as he possessed would be hard to

contemplate. Practically an authority on every subject, save music, every word he uttered was weighed carefully and absolutely correct. When the Alhambra, made famous by Washington Irving and others, fell a prey to the fiery element, Dr. Taylor gave 95 me a humorous interview, for the State, that ranked almost as a classic.

The Doctor very properly prided himself on the fact that the knowledge imparted by him contained much of value by reason of its practicability. One thing he told us is indelibly impressed upon my mind, and doubtlessly proved of value to others than myself. In our philosophy class we were studying under the head of magnetic electricity. “Doctor,” asked a pupil, “is it not possible that magnetism may account for the suspension of Mahomet's coffin between heaven and earth?” In my early days I had seen a picture of this in Peter Parley's History, and there existed no doubt in the minds of any of us scholars as to this being true. The reply, truly characteristic, came: “Certainly, it might be, my dear. But I am going to give you a piece of advice which I want you to remember all your life. (I, for one, certainly have.) Before you start out to prove anything, always be sure that it is true. Now, it happens that I have been to Medina, and Mahomet's coffin is reposing there in a vault, just like that of any other old worthy.”

Here is an instance, related me by the Doctor, preceded by the inquiry, “Do you know of any other teacher in the public schools who can point to a case where what he taught his pupils directly saved a life? There was a girl in my class by the name of Daisy Godsey. Now, I had always thought that Daisy paid little if any attention to what was going on. One day she went home after school, and her mother told her that a baby next door had been poisoned by eating match heads. Daisy ate her dinner leisurely and then sauntered over. She found things as her mother had described. The baby's mother told her that the doctor had just gone and that he had prescribed a dose of oil for the little sufferer. ‘That is wrong,’ said 96 Daisy; ‘we had poisons for our lesson in chemistry today, and Dr. Taylor particularly told us that oil is good for all kinds of poisons except phosphorus, which it diffuses throughout the system.’ Daisy was so insistent, that another physician was sent

for, and said she was positively correct. And," concluded the doctor, "if the oil had been given, the baby would have surely died."

Doctor Taylor had a special antipathy, real or assumed, for lawyers. This has been alluded to elsewhere. But an answer given counsel in a case twenty years ago will bear telling. It occurred in the Wimmer trial, during his cross-examination by Attorney H. M. Smith, Jr., for the defense. The witness had explained that it was difficult to compare the appearance of the face of a living and dead person, for the reason that, in death, a view was had entirely unlike that in life, of a body lying on its back with the face straight upwards. The lawyer would not take this answer at its "face" value, but continued to ply the doctor with questions as to how he (Smith) would look under certain conditions. Finally, he became impatient, and knocked the legal gentleman out with this reply: "Really, Mr. Smith, I have never had the pleasure of seeing you dead."

The one great treat of the year, Dr. Taylor's Christmas present, consisted of a magic lantern exhibition given by him in the large hall at the Medical College. The children, happy with the thought of coming holidays, would be in great glee, and the entertainment was by far the best had in those days. With his faithful assistant and lifelong crony, Oscar Goode, a calcium light, probably the only one in the city, would be used. There would be a change of program each year, but there were certain old stand-bys that proved perennial favorites. Melrose Abbey by moonlight, with the appropriate quotation from Scott; 97 Rock of Ages with different colored slides, and the hymn of the same name, sung the time I best remember by Miss Florry Wilkinson. And then the piece de resistance, "Old Billy," the college factotum, sitting on a bench in the yard, while a bottle of whiskey (!) descended from heaven right to his mouth. Good old Billy, he died before prohibition came. There must not be omitted from the list the picture of the doctor's office. It stood on the old City Hall lot, Broad street, between Tenth and Eleventh. The fame of this structure, a one-story and basement affair, arose from the advertisement on the cellar entrance, "EQQS." And

even at that, they were never over fifteen cents per dozen. There were “moving” pictures in that day.

A letter from one of his former pupils, Miss Lyon, gave the doctor untold satisfaction. In this she related that a short time before while skating, the ice gave way. “I immediately thought of what you told us in class. I took a good big breath of air and swung on to it. I kept my mouth shut while in the water, and when I came up I took another big breath and swung on to that while I went down the second time. When I came up some one got hold of me and pulled me to safety. If I had not done as you told us, I am sure I would have been drowned.”

Dr. Taylor wrote a number of books, the first and best known being “The Travels of a Doctor of Physics.” He humorously remarked he had never met a person who had failed to read it, nor one who had bought a copy of it.

A few days after the Doctor's death, some work upon which I was engaged took me to Hollywood. Unexpectedly I came across a new-made mound with the flowers yet fresh upon it. Automatically, my hand went to my hat, and standing there bare-headed I could but think how many people lived better and cleaner lives because of the sacrifices of this scholar.

98

Major John Poe, Jr.

Major John Poe, Jr., for more than twenty years Chief of Police of Richmond, had the most erect carriage of any man within my recollection. And he thought and acted as uprightly as he walked. Many a young man who wandered from the straight and narrow came to himself after Major Poe had sent for him and talked to him like the proverbial Dutch uncle. In detecting crime he had no superior, but in preventing crime he did much that never became public. He called no names. He would say to a man not “You are a thief,” but “You have stolen,” so and so. When he took his office, he called on every bank president in

Richmond and remarked: “If your bank is ever robbed from the outside, I will resign.” And right well he kept his word. During his term of office no financial institution lost a dollar by outward robbery. On the contrary, when he found out that an employee was robbing he went to the officials. They laughed at him, but later on found to their sorrow that he knew whereof he spoke. When Smith, a clerk in the State Treasurer's office, was known to be stealing, the Major called on Treasurer Taylor and told him of his subordinate's peculations. Taylor appeared shocked, but had implicit faith in his assistant. “Why,” he replied, “Smith has valuable coal lands in West Virginia.” Smith did have a mine, right there in the Capitol building. After his arrest checks were found in the drawer of his desk, the banks upon which they were drawn having actually gone out of existence. Night after night he partook of individual feasts, always including a bottle or two of champagne. He invariably ate alone, and this 99 extravagant expenditure attracted the attention of the police.

Major Poe, the most genial and companionable of men, told me many stories of old time Richmond, which are interesting as connecting the present with the past. One of the best of these had to do with that splendid gentleman and business man, the late John H. Montague. When quite a lad Montague took a job with the Farmers Bank, located upon the comer where Berry's store now is. The cashier's name was Strother. The first day that Montague went to work he had the job of looking over the various accounts. When he came to that of the merchant prince, John Enders, he was amazed to find it overdrawn $75,000. Convinced he had made a startling and important discovery, he approached Strother and told him what he had ascertained. The cashier, to Montague's surprise, did not seem to be overwhelmed by the information, notwithstanding its importance. “John,” he said, “suppose you put on your hat and go down and tell Mr. Enders about his overdraft.” Montague did as he was told, and found Enders in his warehouse on Twentieth street. The message did not seem to make any great impression on him. In fact, he smiled. “Did Mr. Strother tell you to tell me that?” “Yes,” replied the youth. “Well, you tell Mr. Strother to *-*-*.” “But, Mr. Enders, this is a serious matter, and I will not deliver any such message as

that.” Enders repeated his message and Montague left, greatly nonplussed. Returning to the bank, the youth found the cashier still in a remarkably good humor. He inquired what message Enders had sent. Montague said he would not give such a message to a grown man. Strother insisted, and upon his assurance that he would not take offense, the youth delivered it. Montague noticed that instead of being greatly worried every one seemed in a splendid humor, 100 and that all the employees of the bank had gathered around him and Strother while they were talking. When the youth repeated Enders' words the whole crowd broke out in a roar of laughter, mystifying him all the more. When everything had quieted down, Strother called the young man to him. “John, it was proper for you to tell me of Mr. Enders' overdraft. But you should have asked me if it is all right. Now, it happens that he has $125,000 in collateral here and he can overdraw to that amount.”

The Major told another story of a young man who went into the tobacco business and, against the advice of his father, speculated very heavily. The elder said positively that if the younger got into hot water he would have to work his own salvation, as he did not propose to help him. The young man had a terribly strenuous month, but he had too much gameness to ask help. There came a breathing spell, and the son dropped in to see his father. In response to a query he said he had pulled through, but to use his words, “He had had hews own time.” He inquired why his father had changed his dinner hour from the usual time to one somewhat later. For reply the older man opened his desk drawer, and said, “Son, look here. I knew you were having a terribly hard time this last month, but felt that you deserved it, for you had brought it on yourself. Still, I did not intend to let you go to the wall. Here is $100,000. This money has been lying here for a month. I have been down town every day until the bank closed. If you needed it I would have let you have it. You have had your lesson.”

Another splendid story he told had in turn been related to him by John Enders, the younger. One day he was in his father's office when a man came in and said, “Mr. Enders,

some time since you gave me a bond for $1,000. 101 It has been mislaid, and as it is due, I would like very much to have a check for it."

"Certainly," replied Enders, "just write a receipt for it."

The check and receipt were written and exchanged. The younger man took the receipt and started to the it.

"Oh, no," said the elder; "look on the top shelf of that press and you will find a blank book with 'extraordinary' receipts in it. If you were to the this paper should you need it years from now you could never find it." John the younger followed instructions. Twenty years to a day from that time he was settling his father's estate. Major Legh R. Page came in.

"John," he remarked, "I have here your father's bond for $1,000, seemingly unpaid. It was not his habit to let matters of this kind go by, and I am almost sure it must have been paid. I found it among the papers of an estate I am settling, and in my fiduciary capacity I am compelled to bring suit."

John remembered the "extraordinary receipt" book, and reaching for it, showed the paper. The lawyer at once tore up the bond and the younger man was left to reflect upon the sagacity of his parent.

Travel by canal boat furnished the Major with many a good story. He liked to tell of those long trips, the tedium of which many games relieved. Backgammon, played with dice on the inside of a checker board, proved a great favorite. On one occasion a player had such miserable luck that, in a fit of anger, he broke the board across his knee and threw the whole outfit into the canal. Here they were with a week or more of slow travel in front of them and the chief means of amusement gone. The contrition of the angry one may be imagined. Reaching into his pocket he pulled out a two-dollar bill. Would that make it right? After some thought, the captain accepted 102 it in full of all damages. Then in a few moments he repaired to his cabin and soon returned with a package, containing a replica

of the destroyed board. There had been other angry passengers, and the wholesale price of boards stood at about $1.75 per dozen. Money went far at that day.

But the best story of all Major Poe told on himself. His name had for a number of years been on the roll of the First Presbyterian Church. When Dr. Kerr came to Richmond he called to see him and told him that his name appeared as a member and it would be a good thing for a public official to show himself at church occasionally. The major intimated that while he did the best he could with the lights before him, that he feared his mode of life was not exactly that of a professing Christian, and he hoped the doctor would remove his name from the roll. This the minister refused to do. This conversation occurred several times with the same result, the major always requesting that he be dropped. Having occasion to visit the Second Station one day in winter, when it was raining and freezing, the major tied his animal, a particularly hard-mouthed brute, to one of the iron columns near the foot of the stairs. When he came out he found that, in addition to the rein being covered with ice, the horse, by repeated jerkings, had gotten it into a nice hard knot. The major relieved his feelings by telling the animal in good, vigorous Anglo-Saxon exactly what he thought of him. Very sensibly the horse made no reply, for the chief was in a terrible state by this time. Pulling out his knife, preparatory to chipping off the ice and untying the rein, he was startled to hear, just on the other side of the column, a nice gentle voice saying, “John, let me help you.” It was Dr. Kerr. Together the two chipped the ice and relieved the pressure on the rein. The major spent the best part 103 of the time in wondering if the minister had overheard his confidential remarks addressed to the horse alone and intended only for his ears. Evidently the parson had caught them, for as they put up their knives on leaving, he remarked quietly, “Now, John, I WILL take your name off the books.”

Major Poe served in both the Mexican and Confederate wars. He remembered the killing of Hoyt in the Exchange Hotel, in 1846, and spoke of it to me on several occasions.

The Major, N. D. Hargrove, Luke Harvey and Edward J. Warren were great friends and companions. As they themselves expressed it, their ages could “be covered with a napkin.” Auditor Warren had to deliver a sad message one afternoon: “John, I am afraid we will have to call off our game of whist for tonight. There are three ministers stopping at the house and I don't think it would be exactly respectful to them.”

My last sight of Major Poe was at daybreak of the day of his burial. Strange to relate, death had not altered the erectness of his frame and his head bore the proud carriage of life. The day before our mutual friend, John Bell Bigger, told me, “After seeing John Poe die, suffering as he did, never again will I join in that portion of the creed which begs for deliverance from sudden and violent death.”

104

Peter J. Burton—a Sketch.

Of all the lazy, lovable, loyal, trifling people it has been my lot to know, Peter J. Burton excelled in each particular. My association with him began in 1887, when he, as local editor of the Whig, and myself its scrub reporter, were supposed to work together. He instructed me in the mysteries of newspaper work which he firmly insisted consisted in getting other people to do as much of it as possible. And right well did he live up to his own teachings. One occasion, in particular, is impressed upon my memory. Monday was always the busiest of days. There being no paper that morning practically two days' work had to be done. After a particularly strenuous day, wearied and worn out, P. J. not having shown up, just as I left for home, he walked out of the vault, as fresh as the proverbial daisy and with rosy cheeks. Years before this office had been used as a private bank by the Purcells and the vault had never been disturbed. Peter had been in that place all afternoon and evening, asleep, while his work had been done by me. He thought it a good joke and had no apology.

Burton's long suit, so to speak, consisted of walking sticks. He had every kind ever heard of and a good many unheard of. His favorite of the collection, a blackthorn, invariably traveled with him. Drawn across me right shoulder it meant everlasting friendship; across the left and he had “put the blight” on you. Peter generally announced his coming, when in good humor, with a vigorous demonstration of the hunting cry, “Hark to 'em,” audible for many rods.

Burton held the position, by grace of his good nature, 105 funny stories, and pleasing voice, of clerk to about twenty-two council committees. As a close personal friend of every councilman he stood invincible politically. About three or four times a year the council would pass a resolution requiring the clerk to be at the council chamber from 9 to 12 each morning. This would be solemnly handed him by his good friend, Ben August, after the latter had transcribed it in his impeccable script. With equal regularity, Peter would read it, smile and carefully deposit it in the basket for such purposes made and provided. Ben August did about two-thirds of his work, the other third went by default. The procedure at a committee meeting would be about this. Peter, the clerk, would fail to show up, and after waiting for him until worn out, the quorum, if such there happened to be, became disgusted and went home. The other and more unusual course would be for P. J. to arrive promptly, and after waiting all of two or three minutes, “Oh hell, there ain't going to be any quorum; let's go over to Ned Cummins' and get a drink.” With his splendid voice, he would then break out into “When the Roses Come Again,” or “Do All the Good You Can, as the Days Are Going By.” The first six words of this last title formed his choicest mode of salutation. (“Bound to suffer” was his second one.) The councilmen would join in the chorus and happiness reigned supreme. Good old Solon Woodfin gave me a real hard calling down once when my copy, truthfully read, telling of a committee meeting: “After singing ‘When the Roses Come Again,’ the meeting adjourned.”

Dear Peter, his faults were few, his friends legion. He never harmed any man except himself. He recognized his shortcomings and made no effort to hide them. He gave me

the only authentic description of the “Willies” it has ever been my fortune to procure. He described his 106 entire body as being covered with little devils, each of whom performed on a fiddle. He succeeded in getting rid of all of them but two, one on each great toe, who continued to fiddle to his (Peter's) torture.

Ned Cummins, who ran a bar on Broad Street two doors above the City Hall, and Burton were great cronies. Many were the stories told on one another. The best of these was against Cummins, and Peter enjoyed it immensely. The day after President Davis died, in December, 1889, the stockholders of Corcoran Hall, situated on Twenty-fifth Street, near Broad, held their first annual meeting. As a loyal citizen of Richmond, Cummins had purchased a share of this stock to help the good cause. Considering the occasion one of surpassing importance, he chartered a “hack” and the two bosom friends fared forth. Ned was in that condition often compared with the apocryphal “boiled owl.” All during the meeting he seemed obsessed with some idea that would not down. A dozen times he arose from his seat, only to be pulled back into it by his companion. Finally some one made a motion to adjourn and once again Ned started to his feet and met no opposition. He was greatly overcome by the death of the Southern leader, and thought proper notice should be taken thereof. Unfortunately, his entire parliamentary experience had been gained at political meetings, and consisted of endorsing something or somebody. So, with the gravity that the occasion demanded, Ned addressed the chair. “One second, Mr. Cheerman, one second; I have a motion to offer. I move you, Mr. Cheerman, I move you, sir, that this meeting do endorse the death of Jefferson Davis.”

107

“ Uncle George” Wilde.

George Canning Wilde, mentioned previously, undoubtedly possessed a knowledge of the people of his day never approached in any other quarter. He seemed to know the antecedents of every man and woman in Virginia, besides having other intimate acquintance with their family history. When Judge Hinton handed down his opinion

(dissenting) in the Cluverius case, Wilde had a perfectly valid explanation, involving the judge's family, as to why he did so. Wilde's age proved a puzzle to his friends. An entry in the records of the Hustings Court, found by me several years ago, showed him to have been a deputy clerk of that tribunal previous to the Mexican War. In 1881, while working on the Debt Payer, General Wickham's paper, he wrote an excellent account of the ball tendered Lafayette, in Richmond in 1824. He hardly attended that function, but if he did not he seemed to think he did.

James P. Wood and Wilde were bosom friends. The latter fondly designated the former as “Darling Boy” and “Pudding.” The two lived in a room on the third floor of 1007 East Main Street, just opposite the postoffice. The City Circuit Court rented the second floor of the building, and also a jury room on the third. The particular apartment occupied by the two Bohemians appeared to be a species of No Man's Land, unclaimed by any one. In its center were several cases of tobacco stems, which in addition to serving as a partition and furnishing the “makings,” helped to poison any germs bold enough to appear. History has it that on one occasion “Darling Boy” so far forgot 108 himself as to wield a broom and that, but for the prompt sprinkling of a basin of water (used) on the floor, both would have met death from suffocation. But trouble arose for the care-free pair. It took the shape of this note:

“Messrs. George C. Wilde and James P. Wood:

“Gentlemen,—For nineteen years and six months you have been occupying a portion of my premises at 1007 East Main Street, without the payment of rent. For fear you may claim title under twenty years adverse possession, this is to notify you that you must either move or pay rent.

“Yours truly, “FRANKLIN STEARNS.”

To which this is the reply:

“Mr. Franklin Stearns, “City.

“Yours with reference to our occupancy of your room is to hand. As you truly remark, we have occupied these premises for nineteen years and six months without payment of rent. Neither do we propose to pay rent, nor do we propose to move, but if anything more is said on the score of rent, I shall publish a little sketch and tell how you came to Richmond with a mule and a piece of cart and made your first dollar hauling dirt for the excavators on the James River and Kanawha Canal.

“Yours truly, “GEORGE C. WILDE.”

Stearns made rejoinder to this that he had earned his first money as stated, and saw no reason to be ashamed of it; but, that, for the present, nothng more would be said about rent. A few months after this the Phillips & 109 Stein fire so badly damaged the building that the two cronies removed to Twelfth Street near Franklin.

On a Sunday in the late eighties, George Crutchfield, business manager of the Whig, invited George Wilde, Peter Burton and myself to dinner. Needless to remark, the last named appeared promptly. After a long wait, we fell to. We had finished when Peter came in. He told a sad story. In ample time he had gone to the domicile above referred to to supervise the advent of Wilde into society under proper auspices. After being cajoled, the darling boy consented to go down stairs and bring a pitcher of water. Pouring a small quantity of this into the bowl, George venturesomely dipped his fingers into it for the small fraction of an inch. Hastily withdrawing them, he muttered something about the “depravity of these days. I know what this is good for,” and picking up the bowl sprinkled the floor with its contents. Seeing washing to be a dead issue, Peter suggested a clean shirt. This insinuation brought indignant repudiation to the effect that the shirt had no fault whatever. It had been worn three weeks and had shown no bad qualities. “Besides which,” said George, “Mrs. Crutchfield is not going to make me unfasten my vest and look at my shirt.” A clean collar suggested shared a like fate. “I can turn up my coat collar and Mrs.

Crutchfield will never know but what I had on a freshly laundered one.” About this time he caught sight of a bottle on the mantel. “G. C., have a drink.” He complied. Then not to be outdone in courtesy, “G. C., have one with me.” Thus being on the outside of two perfectly good drinks, George expressed his intention of staying at home, crawled up on his bed and in a minute or two slept the sleep of the just. Hence, Peter's lateness and aloneness.

As old age got a strangle-hold on him, Wilde's circumstances 110 became more and more straightened. In his life he denied pointedly the statement of those who claim Masonry has no good reason for its existence. Once a Mason, always a Mason, and he made no bones of the fact that the greater part of his eating came from suppers of the order, some branch of which providentially met nightly.

It is a shame to record the fact that a man of Wilde's brilliancy fared so badly in his last days, but he died in the city home several years ago.

111

Spiro Zetelle—a Character.

Though a native of Corsica, Spiro Zetelle had as many friends as any Richmonder of his day. Likewise, he could cook a beefsteak to a prettier turn than any man who ever entered this fair city. His reputation as a restauranteur extended throughout the entire country. For some unexplainable reason the newspaper fraternity constituted themselves Zetelle's especial guardians, and evinced their love by playing numerous pranks on him. One of the first of these occurred upon an occasion when his cook having expressed a desire for some frog legs, a party formed and took him to the lair of that beast upon the canal bank, having first explained that they grew to a greater size there than anywhere else in the world. Arriving at the hunting grounds, giving Zetelle the post of vantage, the remainder of the party retired to the bushes to the side of the tow-path. “Kerchunk,” and there right in front of him stood the father of all frogs, a giant in size. Taking careful aim, he fired, only to be met by a louder “Kerchunk” than before. Three times this had been repeated, when

a great light dawned upon him. Telling the story himself, he said, “Then I heard that damn Charley Walker laugh in the bushes,” and he found out he had been shooting at a most beautiful iron frog of a door weight.

Charley Hunt and Zetelle were friends for years until the former “double-crossed” him. A party formed to go fishing at West Point on a certain day. Contrary to all precedent, Zetelle went in full paint and war feathers, decking himself in the “broadcloth” and “beaver hat” of 112 that time. Scientific fishing being the order of the day, each man had a separate boat. All went well until Zetelle noticed the water rising in his boat. Greatly excited, he called to his companion, “Charley Hunt, the boat is full of water.”

“Keep quiet one second, Zetelle; I have a splendid bite.”

Nothing having been done, in a few moments the cry rose again; this time yet more insistent, “Charley Hunt, the boat, it sink.” Once again Hunt implored for quiet. Having repeated the cry several times with no succor in sight, Zetelle finally had to wade and swim ashore. He never forgave his friends for this, and for years he and Hunt were sworn enemies. There came a day when word went forth that Charley Hunt lay dying. At this Zetelle's rancor disappeared. Later a mutual friend came in and told Zetelle that the dying man wanted his (Zetelle's) forgiveness for the scurvy trick he had played on him years before. With solemn mien he went to Hunt's bedside.

“Zetelle,” he said, “that was a rough trick I played on you that day; it has always worried me; the doctor says I am dying; I want you to forgive me.”

“That's all right, Charley Hunt; don't you worry; I am sorry you are dying, and I forgive you.”

He lingered a few minutes longer and, shaking Hunt's hand, sadly took his departure. While not having been heard of at that time, Zetelle evidently acted as avant courier of the present day “Safety First,” for as he turned to leave the room, he spoke once again, “But, Charley Hunt, if you do get well you are the damndest scoundrel in Richmond.”

But on occasions Zetelle would turn the table, and some other person would be the butt of the joke. He kept a select place on Main Street between Ninth and Tenth, where he would board a few people. A young Englishman, who 113 had entertained a number of Richmond young men on the other side upon occasion, was one of these favored few. Zetelle as a favor was to give him the best of treatment. The Briton himself joked occasionally, but unsmilingly. The choicest beefsteak, mutton chops, veal chops and the like were passed up with the invariable answer that any one who killed anything as small as that in England would have been severely punished. Zetelle was nearly heartbroken, but he realized that the point where patience ceased to be a virtue had been reached. He called his steward. “John, go down to Mrs. Bellenot's and borrow four of the largest terrapins in her aquarium.” Like a good servant, John obeyed orders. Rooms were in demand and valuable, so Zetelle kept his office desk in the hall. The Briton came in at a reasonable hour that night. Zetelle listened intently as he retired. No sooner had he hit the bed than he appeared in the hall, having made about two record jumps. The four insects from the Bellenot collection were hanging from his night shirt. (Pajamas had not yet been discovered.)

“Great God, Zetelle,” he exclaimed, “what are these?”

Lapsing into his native accent, the host replied, “Zose? Zose are bed bugs. Do you have 'em any larger than zat in England?”

But withal Zetelle showed himself as loyal a Richmonder as if to the manor born. On a fatal night a resident of the Windy City ate one of his beefsteaks, and like Adam, he fell. He promised the restauranteur that if he Would go with him to Chicago, he and his friends would make him rich. This and subsequent appeals were refused, but the Chicagoan became more and more insistent and made an offer that really gave Zetelle pause. Such a proposition had to be thought over, and Zetelle promised an answer at dusk two days later. The stranger arrived promptly. 114 Taking him to the door Zetelle pointed to the first star of the evening, which had just made its appearance, shining faintly. “See zat little

star?” he inquired. “I had razzer see zat one leettle star in Richmond than ze whole damn firmament in Chicago.”

115

Something Else Needed.

Governor Philip W. McKinney was a most lovable man. His popularity in Richmond could have been greater, but the lack of cordiality between him and the merchants of the city arose from the fact that His Excellency had a frugal bent. The cause of this, made public years after, was that as a security for his brother he had paid out large sums of money, necessitating great economy while in the gubernatorial chair. One winter the Governor's indisposed condition kept him a prisoner in the mansion for some weeks. He seemed to take a great liking to Dr. G. Watson James and myself, both working on The Dispatch at that time, and nearly every afternoon he would have one or the other of us to come up and sit with him. Possibly his fancy for us arose from that fact that, no matter of what he spoke, it was mutually understood that nothing he said should be published. As a consequence, he told some mighty interesting things. Having visited every one of the hundred counties in the State during his canvass, he knew lots worth talking about. He has been dead, lo these many years, and it is no violation of confidence to tell here one of the best stories he ever related, and in a style that none could approach. On one occasion, in cog, he visited the city of Petersburg, then in the throes of a congressional campaign. With a negro carrying his grip, he came to Sycamore Street, where a large bonfire blazed ‘Why this bonfire?” he inquired. “There's gwine to be a 'lection, boss.” “Election, for what?” “For congressman, boss”

116

“For congressman, well who are the candidates?”

“Well, suh, Mr. Langston (negro first, of course), he's runnin'; Mr. Arnold (Republican), he's runnin', and Mr. Venable (Democrat), he's runnin'.”

“Well, who do you suppose will be elected?”

“I dunno, boss; but I 'spec Mr. Langston gwine git the mos' votes.”

“Well, if Langston gets the most votes won't he be elected?”

“Dunno so much 'bout that, boss; dunno so much 'bout that; there's somethin' else needed 'sides mos' votes; I dunno what it is, but that is somethin' else needed.”

The Governor told of his experiences in extreme Southwestern Virginia, which adjoins several other States and at that time bore the title of “HeWs Half Acre.” Most of the residents of the strip were wanted by officers for “moonshining,” as a rule. Generally when he drove to the front of the house a man would run out the back door and make for the woods.

On one ocassion, when he had stopped over night in one of these houses he arose early and wandered around. On the bank of the New River he found a small still weighing probably several hundred pounds. It stood, neatly balanced, on a pile of stones, and a good man could put his shoulder against it, and giving a strong shove, sink it in seventy-five feet of water. A small boat, moored at hand, would furnish transportation to the other shore, a sheer precipice, from which dangled a rope ladder. A few strokes of the oars would take one across and, ascending the ladder, pull it up after him. This position was impregnable and all the revenue agents in the country could not dislodge a person from it.

117

What One Comma Did.

In the spring of 1892, the editor of The State, recognizing my archaeological bent, sent me out with instructions to write up the old cemeteries about the city. In due time St. John's came within my purview. Keeper Griffagni, who still holds forth at the old stand, and renders Patrick Henry's oration from the original point of a delivery in a manner that Henry

himself could never hope to equal, acted as my guide. Griffagni showed as his choice exhibit a grave which he thus described: “John Page, Governor of Virginia when sixteen years of age.” Into print this promptly went, and equally as promptly came a polite request for my presence in the sanctum sanctorum of the editor. He pointedly asked me my source of information with regard to a boy being Governor of this grand old Commonwealth. A plea of guilty followed, with the extenuating circumstance that the lines had been literally dictated to me by the custodian of St. John's who knew all his charges, or thought he did, from way back. Griffagni being approached by me proved an alibi by saying what he had told me appeared on the back of photographs peddled by Walker Wilson to visitors at the Capitol Building.

Wilson, a special protege of Governor Fitz Lee's, held undisputed sway in that edifice. Upon one occasion the irrepressible Fitz had told Walker, anent the oil painting of Christopher Columbus, hanging in the corridor near his office, that “Those who remembered Columbus said this was the best likeness of him in existence.” After which Walker religiously told all comers that “All his friends 118 say this is a perfect likeness.” A short talk with Walker and he produced the picture. The back bore this inscription, “John Page, Governor of Virginia, (note that comma) when sixteen years of age.” And whenever Griffagni sees me enter the cemetery he throws up his hands and asks me please not to tell the story this one time.

119

Well Policed—a Lynching.

Like many another story, that of Dawson is both sad and humorous. Some years ago a correspondent of mine in another portion of the State made inquiry of me as to him. Hunting up my old friend, Police-Sergeant John T. Hall, he related the following:

“Dawson was on the Richmond police force just after the close of the war (between the States). His relieving post was at Tenth and Main Streets. A careful search of his beat

invariably failed to disclose any sign of him. Years after it turned out that the officer used to spend a large part of his time playing poker over N. M. Lee's grocery, Cary Street between Tenth and Eleventh. Finally, the captain came to me one morning and said, ‘Hall, let's you and I put in our entire morning on Dawson's beat and try to find out what he does with himself.’ So the captain went over the beat ten times that morning and I seven. Never a sign of Dawson did we discover. Promptly at 1 o'clock up Tenth Street he comes, swinging his club carelessly, as usual, ready to be relieved. The captain jumped him at once. ‘Dawson, where in the hell have you been all morning. I have been over your beat ten times this morning, and Sergeant Hall has been over it seven times and neither of us has laid eyes on you.’ ‘Captain, have you been over my beat ten times this morning?’ ‘Yes, sir.’ ‘And Sergeant Hall has been over it seven times?’ ‘Yes, sir.’ ‘Then all I have to say is that has been damned well policed.’

“After leaving the police force Dawson and his family removed to Cumberland County. He had a son who was 120 a rather wild young fellow. One Saturday afternoon young Dawson and a friend, both of them pretty drunk, started to cross a covered bridge over the river. A short time before a peddler, with his wagon load of wares, had taken the same route. After a time the two young men emerged from the structure, all covered with blood, driving the peddler's outfit. A search disclosed the peddler lying on the bridge, dying, having been knocked in the head, but not robbed. The two young men were at once arrested, and so sure were the people in the neighborhood that they had killed the peddler that the pair were taken out and hung.

“Some years afterwards a dying tramp confessed he had committed the murder with a view of robbing the peddler. Just after he had knocked the man in the head, and before he had time to go through the pockets of his clothes, these young men came along. On their approach, he (the tramp) climbed into the rafters of the bridge. The drunken men, finding the empty wagon standing there, got in and drove off to their death.”

John Jasper.

John Jasper, of “Sun-Do-Move” fame, and William Ryan, managing editor of The State, were evidently great admirers of each other. By the way, the Reverend John always vigorously repudiated the idea that he used such bad grammar, as alleged by the title given his sermon. Jasper is the only divine, white or colored, who had the proper opinion of the status of a newspaper man. Those from The State at least invariably occupied seats on the pulpit, he realizing that the disciples of truth and religion should go hand in hand.

In the early summer of '92, a report that Brother Jasper had ideas matrimonial in his head caused me to be sent post haste to his domicile. Jasper, an inveterate cat-fisher-man, could generally be found at home when not engaged in sport piscatorial. Sitting in his bedroom, around two sides of which were about twenty pairs of perfectly good shoes and boots, he pleaded guilty to the soft impeachment. Suggestion that his age might prove a barrier to matrimonial conquests new brought forth this statement: “Yes, sir, I was born on the fourth day of July, 1812, and, so far as I know, there is not a man, woman, or child in Richmond now that was here then. The lady where I am going to marry is the mother of grandchildren.” (Jasper then went on to give me some valuable physiological data which I will be glad to furnish any one who will send me two sheets of postage stamps, two-cent preferred. It cannot be printed here out of deference to the feelings of the U. S. P. O. inspectors.)

It has been stated some where that Jasper's admirers, 122 in view of the fact that bronze monuments are always erected in honor of white men, evened up by having a white marble figure put up to his memory.

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Calling Names.

Nothing is now left but the purely personal side of my recollections. Among my friends and journalistic acquaintances have been a number whom it was a liberal education and a joy to have known. Overworked and underpaid, in a position to have received large financial remuneration by a departure from the straight and narrow, they did not fall. The breath of suspicion to my knowledge, except in one doubtful case, never arose. It is difficult to name them all. Colonel Charles O'Brien Cowardin and Colonel W. Dallas Chesterman, of The Dispatch; Henry K. Ellyson, of the same paper, who really blazed the way for a great paper in Richmond. “Don't send out the paper unless you have something in it,” he proclaimed on every occasion. And woe be unto him who mentioned any business brought before a deliberative body and failed to tell how it was disposed of. Others on The Dispatch were Dr. G. Watson James, afterwards of The News Leader, the most conscientious and learned of men; Solon B. Woodfin local editor and afterwards on The Times, now of The Virginian; Cabell Trueman, Clyde and Clarence West, Clarence Boykin, Herbert Duce, W. J. Carter, of “Broad Rock” fame; E. Bruce Chesterman and Peyton R. Noel, two of the best political writers of their day, both of whom later worked on The State: the former is dead, the latter is in the Middle West; Evan R. Chesterman, son of the local and afterwards managing editor; E. Bruce Chesterman, Jr., W. G. Stanard, Jefferson Wallace, Creed Davis, George Carter, and McRee. Nor is my friend, George Minter (“Araminta”) to be overlooked.

On The State were William Ryan and William W. Archer and, at a later day, Walter Savory, editors; Benjamin P. Owen, W. C. Taylor, “Truthful Jeems” Gentry.

Among those on the staff of The Whig in my day were Judge Nowlin, editor; — Herndon, Clarence Woolfolk, Sam Gilliland, George Hill, an authority on Shakespeare and (listen, ye scribes) the Bible; later came Captain W. G. Waller, a kinsman of Mrs. Jefferson Davis, and who after gave allegiance to The Times; on the last-named journal was John D. Murrell, the most courtly and genial of accurate writers; Max Cuthbert, of the New York

Herald; John Pizzini, of the Associated Press; J. P. Wood and George C. Wilde, free lances. Necessarily some are omitted. My memory of names is not so good as for facts and dates. To those who are overlooked, my abject apology is offered with the qualification that my mind, not my heart, forgets.

Many a morning at 4:30 a quartet of us would hie to the domicile of Wilde and Wood, heretofore described, and indulge in a game of whist. Never a penny changed hands on the result. Often we played until 6 or 7 o'clock, the contest being one of skill only. The usual participants were Captain Waller, John Pizzini, Wood and myself. There were variations, but we had one saying that always held good. Now it comes to mind seriously: “Which way do the sun rise?”

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